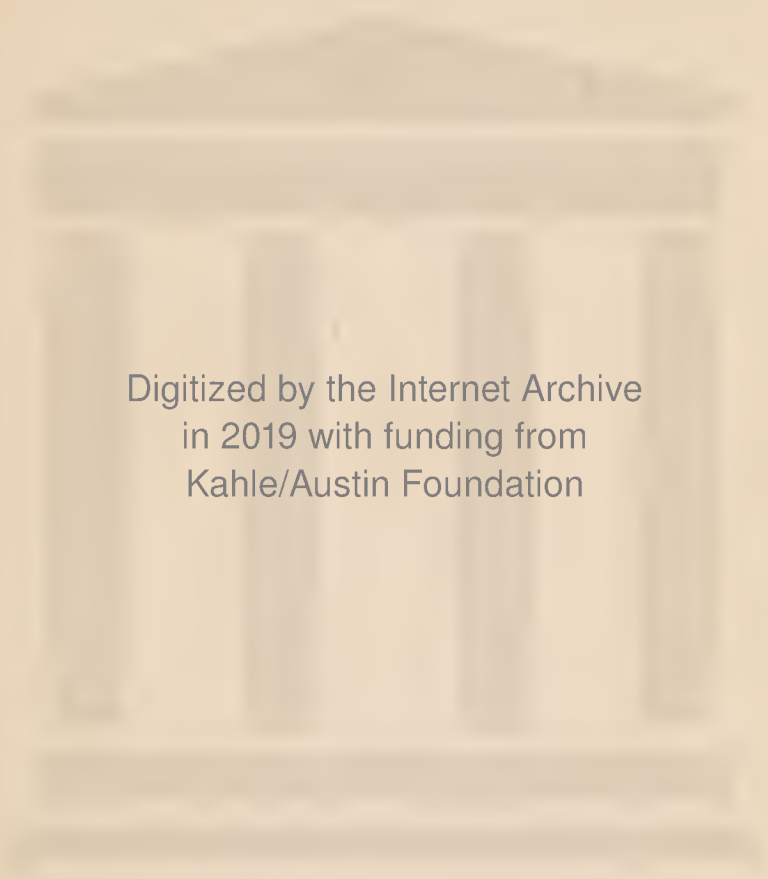


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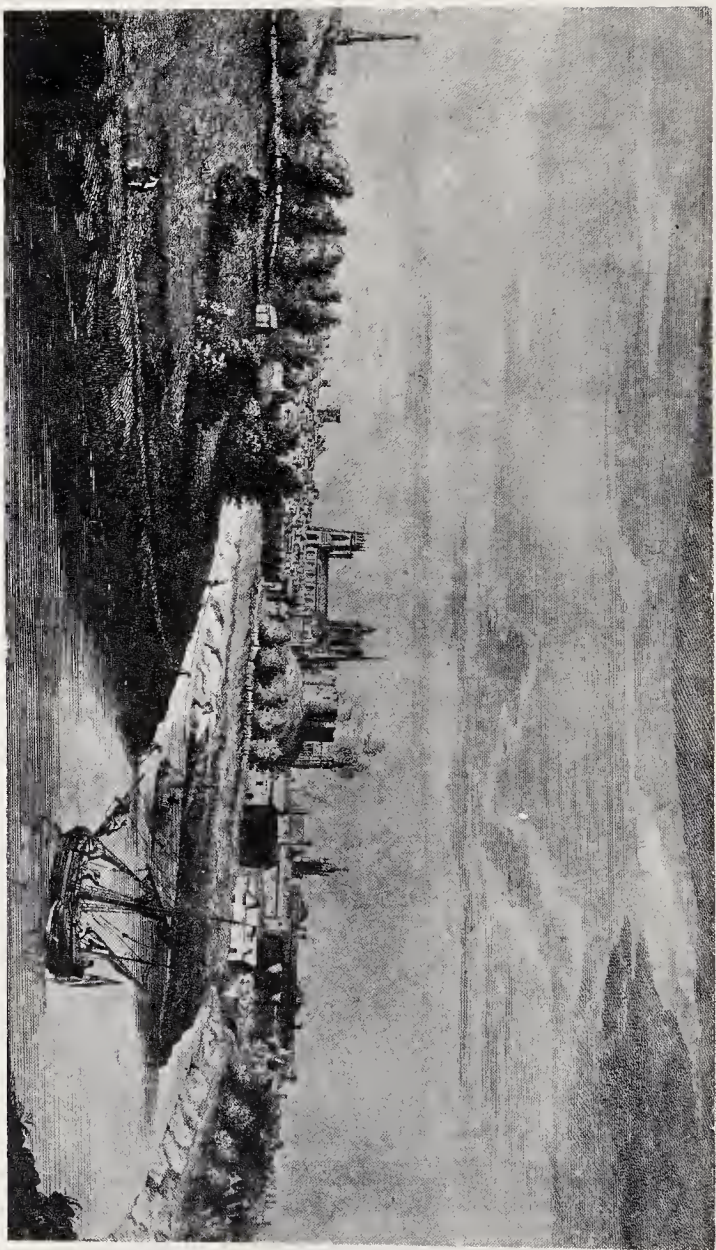
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YORK FROM NEAR THE CONFLUENCE OF THE RIVERS OUSE AND FOSS

THE POLITICKS OF LAURENCE STERNE

BY LEWIS PERRY CURTIS

Towards the age of twenty-six,
They shoved him into politics.

HILAIRE BELLOC.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

1929

Printed in Great Britain

PR 3716
.C8

PREFACE

WHILE preparing an edition of the letters of Laurence Sterne, I investigated the relations of the novelist with the newspapers of York. Various rumours had told of Sterne's writing for a paper in the years when he was yet unknown to the world, but these vague statements had never become more than suppositions. Eventually Robert Davies, the historian of the York press, stumbled upon the mention of a forgotten newspaper that was published during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-6. Ever in search of Sterne's activities in York, he surmised that this might be the paper for which the young Prebendary had written. He reasoned that since Cæsar Ward, the printer of the *York Courant*, was a decided Tory, Dr. Jaques Sterne and his nephew would have found it difficult to insert their articles in that paper, and that, in consequence, to suit their own designs they founded an organ of strong Whig sentiments. The printer was John Gilfillan, who had once been useful to the Tories and who had gone over to the side of the Whigs. The paper was *The York Journal, or The Protestant Courant*, and bore in its title a slur upon the *York Courant*, since the word 'Protestant' precluded any suspicion that the paper was tainted with Jesuit opinions. Davies was not able to examine the value of his suggestion, since at that time not a single copy of the paper had apparently survived.¹

¹ Robert Davies, *A Memoir of the York Press*, Westminster 1868, pp. 321-4; Wilbur L. Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, New Haven 1925, i, pp. 71, 75.

The journal, however, was not completely lost. Since the publication of Davies's book in 1868, thirty-eight copies have been discovered. Councillor Thomas Gray, of York, some years ago unearthed in a London bookshop thirty-two numbers and generously presented all but one to the York Public Library. Recently another copy, which described the battle of Culloden, was acquired by the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, and within the past year I have found five other copies among bundles of newspapers in the Library of the Dean and Chapter at York, or, as it is more commonly called, the York Minster Library. The thirty-eight numbers date from No. 25, Tuesday, 13 May 1746,¹ to No. 383, Tuesday, 3 April 1753,² when the paper disappears from present record. By computation it appears, therefore, that the journal was first published on Tuesday, 26 November 1745, a moment when the rebels were achieving success and when Dr. Sterne was carrying forward his persecution of his Tory enemy, Dr. John Burton. The time was ripe for establishing a new Whig paper, since York felt great alarm for the safety of Protestantism and was in need of a journal to undertake its defence. Upon the appearance of the newspaper it was called *The York Journal, or The Protestant Courant*, but during the year 1750 it occasionally adopted the title of *The Protestant York Courant*, under which after November 1750 it was always published.³ The journal is a folio in one sheet, consisting of pages one to four unnum-

¹ National Library of Scotland.

² York Public Library, Y 070.

³ *Protestant York Courant*, Numb. 279, Tuesday, 26 March 1751 [p. 1]. York Public Library, Y 070.

bered. The print is distributed into three columns, the centre one of which is separated from the others by vertical rules.

Those numbers of the Whig paper that are preserved at York and date from 19 April 1748, although they are too late for the notices of 1745-6 which Professor Cross believes Sterne to have written, I have examined carefully without finding any positive trace of the hand of the humorist. The articles published in the *York Journal* are highly argumentative in character and concern themselves with a defence of the Protestant Church. Yet there remains a possibility that Sterne may have interested himself in the paper quite apart from the political notices his uncle was likely to require him to write, for there appeared in the paper, in its issue of 13 March 1750-1, the first of a series of literary essays. Suggested by *The Spectator* and called *The Observer*, the papers purported to be 'written by some Gentlemen here (York, *ed.*), and in *London*, and both Universities, who have formed themselves into a Society to furnish weekly for their Paper, under a Name, a short Dissertation which is intended to promote the Cause of Protestantism and public Spirit; and to form a good Taste in Matters of Wit, Humour, and public Diversions'. One of the writers of these essays is called *Philocalus* and is described as 'an impartial Admirer of whatever is beautiful in *material Nature*, in the *Arts*, but especially the *Affections*. Hence his overflowing Humanity makes him measure every Thing by it's Efficacy to promote Happiness. 'Tis in Consequence of this Principle, that, as a Preacher, (for *Philocalus* is our Divine,) he is

content to sacrifice the Character of a *learned* Divine for that of an *instructive* and *pathetic* Declaimer. He is remarkably scrupulous not to use one Word in the Pulpit, whose Force may not easily be comprehended by the meanest of his Audience:—And frequently bemoans himself if any such slip from him.’¹

Perhaps one reads of Laurence Sterne, pathetic declaimer. By the year 1751 he may have revealed signs of the sentimentalist he was in later years, and published his philosophy to the community. His sermons are certainly decked in as homely phrase as those of *Philocalus*. His congregation was too often made up of a ‘Bellows Blower, 3 Singing men’.² His theory of preaching was that of the essayist, and came from the lips of Yorick himself. ‘To preach’, he said one day as if he were none other than *Philocalus*, ‘to shew the extent of our reading, or the subtilities of our wit—to parade it in the eyes of the vulgar, with the beggarly accounts of a little learning, tinselled over with a few words which glitter, but convey little light and less warmth—is a dishonest use of the poor single half hour in a week which is put into our hands. ’Tis not preaching the gospel, but ourselves. For my own part, continued *Yorick*, I had rather address five words point blank to the heart.’³ The parallel in sentiment is close. Since Sterne seems to have treasured a file of the *York*

¹ *Protestant York Courant*, Numb. 276, Tuesday, 5 March 1750–51 [p. 3].

² Cross, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 286.

³ *Works of Laurence Sterne*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, ii, Bk. IV, chap. xxvi, p. 86.

Journal in his library,¹ it is possible, when are found issues of the paper containing essays by *Philocalus* who signed with the letter P., that Sterne will be revealed as the author of these sentimental articles.

The York Journal, later called the *Protestant York Courant*, however plausible my suggestion may be, did not contain the important political articles Sterne is known to have written. My discovery of the actual paper of which he was editor is evidence that he had largely abandoned politics by the year 1746 and must allay the surmises of Davies and Professor Cross. Sterne's newspaper was called *The York Gazetteer*. It appeared in March 1741 was in existence in 1745,² and probably concluded its work shortly after the *York Journal* took its place in November of that year. The fortunate discovery of this paper has served to clear away the mists that surrounded Sterne at that period of his life and has led me to unearth many new facts about his early years. *The York Gazetteer*, for which Sterne wrote throughout a period of twelve months, contains his first printed articles. The Tory journal, the *York Courant*, which I have been able to examine, presents his first recorded writings. He reveals himself in this last newspaper as the champion of the Whig party during the contested elections of 1741 and

¹ Among books from Sterne's library was the *York Journal, or Weekly Advertiser*, 26 March 1745—8 March 1748. As I have never met with a notice of this paper, I infer it is the newspaper in question. 'March' may have been a misprint for 'November', and the subtitle *Weekly Advertiser* either the name first employed by Gilfillan or the whim of the cataloguer of Sterne's books. Cf. p. 128 n.

² Robert Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

1742, maintaining a controversy of politics and satire. Further investigations have brought forth Sterne's first book, a pamphlet with the title *Query upon Query*, which rests in the collection of Edward Hailstone in the York Minster Library, as well as several details of his activities that have not previously been known. Sterne's first appointment in the church of York was not the living of Sutton on the Forest but an assistant curacy in the parish of Catton. Sterne it was who officiated at the marriage of his college friend, John Hall, of Skelton Castle, to Anne Stevenson in February 1739-40. He preached the sermon in York Minster in 1743, when the cathedral was celebrating the double occasion of the installation of Archbishop Herring and the anniversary of the accession to the throne of George II. The result of these discoveries I believe to be happy. By means of them Sterne reveals himself active in literary affairs nineteen years before the publication of *Tristram Shandy*. Not only thereby does the quarrel with this uncle find its root in Sterne's political fray, but the portrait of Yorick at the age of twenty-six is thoroughly explained. When in his twenty-seventh year he supported the Whig candidate for the county of York, Sterne was the fellow he later described.

For assistance in collecting these pages I am indebted to my sister, Miss Louise Curtis. In Yorkshire I have received aid from Mrs. John Ingilby, of North Deighton, and Colonel George Lane-Fox, of Bramham Park, and at York from Councillor Thomas Gray, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Gray, the Reverend Angelo Raine, the Reverend Frederick

Harrison, librarian to the Dean and Chapter, the Chapter Clerk, and the Registrar of the Diocese of York. The editors of the *Yorkshire Herald*, Mr. Charles Bex and Mr. Alexander Wisely, have graciously permitted me to examine the rare files of the *York Courant* that are preserved at their office at York. To mention the distinguished name of Professor Wilbur Cross is at once to imply the guidance I have received from his writings, his instruction, and his encouragement. To Mr. Thomas P. Cooper, of Acomb, it is that I owe my heartiest thanks. With his knowledge of the history and customs of the city of York he has been of inestimable assistance in the fashioning of this little book. For his generous interest and friendship I am profoundly grateful.

L. P. C.

YALE UNIVERSITY.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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I

FIFTY YEARS after the cap and bells and the pocket-handkerchiefs of Mr. Yorick had been laid away with him in the burying-ground of St. George's, Hanover Square, Sterne was quite as dead as old Marley. He had been an unconscionable time in dying, for the men of the last decade of the eighteenth century still heard anecdotes of his conquest and recounted the sallies of his wit. They read of him in the memoirs of their parents, they were still in sympathy with his emotions. When these were dead, and when a new generation had taken their places, men grew ashamed of this clergyman who once 'delighted in debauchery' and did their best to put his uncleanness from their minds. Bulwer, of course, found him out and made use of his carcass. Carlyle and Trollope were under his influence, and Thackeray, the while he delivered his stupid denunciation of the man, acknowledged the beauty of his writings. There was living that fellow who read only two books, the *Bible* and *Tristram Shandy*, and perhaps a handful of people who did not take offence at the indecorums, as others called the humour, of his novels. None the less he was thoroughly dead and his life was about unknown, when Percy Fitzgerald, in 1864, published a life of Sterne in two volumes, and surprised a world that did not imagine so much could be written about him. The world would admit he had possibly been born and had died in neglect, a just reward for a wicked life, that he had written *Tristram Shandy*, and journeyed abroad to gather material for his last book. It knew no

more. Fitzgerald, although not an ideal biographer, had at last given it something to read, and even provoked it to learn more about the great humorist. Antiquaries published thereafter odds and ends of information, and critics attempted to solve the riddle of his personality. During this quickening of interest biographies other than Fitzgerald's made their appearance in England, and in America not many years ago Professor Cross was printing his *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*. After the appearance of that book Sterne required neither puffing nor justification. His fame was assured. His biographer had succeeded in portraying him more clearly than any previous writer, and in sympathetic understanding had almost equalled the great portrait of Joshua Reynolds, who saw in Sterne the satyr's mouth and the tragic, the unforgettable eyes.

The inevitable tendency of these studies and biographies of the humorist has been to emphasize his life and personality. Sterne was a man of eccentricities and tenderness, of humour and mental anguish, and pursued so haphazard, so Shandean and sentimental a course through life, that the two are bound inextricably together with his books. To these students of his work to read him was to explore his activities, and to examine his life was to return with greater pleasure to read his books. They discovered what will always be discovered, that among English authors there is none whose writing is more a part of the man. Sterne's biography is a self-evident criticism of his novels. His biography is, furthermore, the source and secret of that peculiar atmosphere which pervades every page of *Tristram Shandy* and the *Sentimental Journey*. It is eternally interesting, for when one reads Sterne, or Chaucer, or

Shelley, or listens to the music dramas of Wagner, there is always that desire to know the man, to know the most trivial occurrences in his life, that at once they may serve to explain both his art and himself.

In this respect much has been done for Sterne. Owing particularly to the researches of Professor Cross we are thoroughly familiar with the famous years of Sterne's life, when he was the lion of London society, when he toured France and Italy, and when he wrote the *Journal to Eliza*. By a judicious use of the material at hand that illumines his last years, and by a comparison of his two novels, we can realize how the *Sentimental Journey* came to be written. In *Tristram Shandy* there is apparent that jocose coarseness, which in the nineteenth century made the reading of the book to one's wife and daughter a most unnatural abomination. In the *Sentimental Journey* there are the Monk and Maria. The change from one manner to the other was slow but never halting, and was achieved mainly by the breakdown of Sterne's powers of physical resistance. The psychological background of this last work is almost clear before us. But this is far from true of Sterne's greatest work, the appearance of which is like that of a bomb in the annals of literature.

Tristram Shandy was the production of a prebendary of York. The first two volumes were written in a small parish within a few miles of the city, and were without question printed and published under the towers of York Minster. The author of the little volumes displayed a style and fitness for his work nothing short of marvellous. How he came by it has been the mystery. As a boy he had followed an army, and received a slovenly education at a Yorkshire

school and at Cambridge as well. He had gone to York to spend there twenty years before he began to write his novel. The immediate cause of his turning author in earnest had been the encouragement he sensed from the publication of a brilliant pamphlet, *A Political Romance*, which, although a satire of local interest, revealed an experienced hand and gave promise of future successes. Besides this pamphlet there had been an indifferent poem, some sermons, and many letters. Sterne had passed through the bitterness of personal and party quarrels, had enjoyed the social amenities of a cathedral town, undertaken the management of farm lands, and suddenly written a great novel. York, of course, was a centre of printing and bookselling; the county could later produce Emily and Charlotte Brontë; but such possibilities as these are of dubious value in explaining the origin of *Tristram Shandy*. In consequence, it has long been evident that the training Sterne received at York was insufficiently revealed, that of his life which was so close a part of the spirit in his books, so much the secret of their genius, that portion which he spent at York was the most important of all. Indeed, it shaped and fitted him for fame, but, when once he had found his legs and could walk with notoriety and applause about him, our own curiosity changes to admiration. He is complete in these later years and familiar to every one. It is to those twenty years of obscure struggle, rural gaiety, and crude jests that we turn, there to consider how he developed, and there to find more darkness than light, for this period of his life has never been emphasized in proportion to its deserts. The discovery of his political adventures in 1741 and 1742, however, must

serve to enlarge our knowledge. The literary schooling he required in middle age he began while defending a Whig candidate for Yorkshire in those years of his youth. By writing for newspapers at York he may have embroiled himself uncomfortably and fled away in penitence, but by means of his articles he opened a career that he followed consistently until the year 1760, and in which he slowly prepared himself for a sudden and merited success.

The city of York in the day when Sterne first entered it as a clergyman of the diocese was a city that took itself seriously. Bringing from the Middle Ages its mighty cathedral and girdle of grey walls, it remembered its significance in the history of England and instilled in its citizens a passionate sense of their own importance. It had for generations been the capital of the north, and, during the first half of the eighteenth century, looked upon itself as the seat of northern learning, society, and politics. Despite the presence of the Minster and the many small churches whose towers and spires rose irregularly above the red roofs and chimney-pots of dwellings, despite the air of ecclesiastical dignity that it always presented to the stranger, it was not so much a city of clerical affairs as one of politics and faction. The Dean and Chapter, the crowd of vicars and mean curates, who walked in the shadows of gables down narrow streets, even to the old Archbishop in his palace without the city, still held their heads high as political powers of the county. They formed together a faction which could better persuade men to loyalty than to virtue, and ranged themselves more formidably against political opposition than against heresy itself. In a day when Walpole forced his greatness to its limits in order to

maintain the inadequate House of Hanover upon the throne, when Scotland with its Jacobite sentiments threatened that very establishment and with it the safety of Protestantism, these vicars of York had a ready business to undertake. Save for a few Tories in their midst they were allied to the Whig cause, and were the champions of one party in complete hostility to the other. Sterne had not failed to join their ranks, for he realized how unfavourable a beginning he must make in his career should he acknowledge himself a Tory. He had come to York in 1738 and, three years later, proved his loyalty at the first opportunity that presented itself, the elections of 1741.

Although the importance of the elections of that year was a matter of immediate consequence, the passions that broke loose during the months of campaigning as well as the positions taken by the foremost politicians of the city had been already formed in the election of 1734, a contest so furiously waged by both parties that it was considered 'the Greatest Election that Ever was known for the County of York'.¹ Here were sown the seeds not only of the political exigencies of the county for the next ten years but also of the animosities that split the society of the city into two camps and divided it upon every conceivable topic. From the election of this year developed the hatred between Dr. Jaques Sterne, the notorious uncle of Laurence, and Dr. John Burton, scholar and man-midwife. From this contest also arose Sterne's dislike of Burton and the initial cause of his caricature as the Dr. Slop of *Tristram Shandy*. Whig spread reports against Tory, and Tory re-

¹ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1882, vii, p. 54, 'Book of Remarks of William Storr,' of Scalm Park, Wistow, Yorks.

taliated with effect. If the account of this election should seem far removed from Laurence Sterne, it will greatly help to create the background against which he was obliged to play his part. It will reveal the Whig candidates, Sir Rowland Winn and Cholmley Turner, both of whom were acquaintances of Sterne, as well as the young Burton, whose efforts on behalf of the Tory candidates, Sir Miles Stapylton, of Myton, and Edward Wortley, first aroused the anger of Dr. Sterne. In addition to these prominent gentlemen of Yorkshire there is Edward Thompson, the Whig candidate chosen to stand for the City, who now opposed the popular Tory baronet, Sir John Lister Kaye.

Of the four candidates Cholmley Turner, of Kirkleatham, was destined to become the most important. This Whig, who was head of a 'truly worshipful and eminent house',¹ established in the North Riding not far from the future seat at Skelton of John Hall-Stevenson, had come into a large fortune, originally amassed by his grandfather, Sir William Turner, Lord Mayor of London in 1669, and founder of the family at Kirkleatham. Cholmley Turner's father had been Charles Turner, and had married a Yorkshire heiress in the person of a sister of Sir Hugh Cholmley, of Whitby. The heir of this alliance, the present candidate for the shire, had been born in 1685,² and had received his education at New College, Oxford, where he matriculated in May 1701.³ Following his graduation he had returned to Kirkleatham Hall and, in

¹ John G. Nichols, *The Topographer and Genealogist*, London, June 1846, Pt. vi, i, p. 505.

² John W. Ord, *The History of Cleveland*, London 1846, pp. 369, 376.

³ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, Oxford 1892, iv, v.s. Turner, p. 1519.

1708, had further added to the native lustre of his house by marrying Jane Marwood, daughter and heiress of George Marwood, of Little Busby, Yorkshire.¹ Three years before this marriage he had begun to take part in the affairs of his county when he was appointed Deputy-Lieutenant of the North Riding by the first Duke of Newcastle.² The year before his marriage, during the alarm caused by the Pretender's pop-gun invasion of Scotland in 1708, he had at his own cost equipped himself to defeat that rebel in the north.³ From this generous act, which loyal Whigs could never forget, honours of substantial kind soon came, for he was elected in 1715 to represent Northallerton in the new Parliament of that year. Henceforth he was a politician and passed his life in the House of Commons, a member who was usually honest and never brilliant. He sat in 1722 as Knight of the Shire, serving in that capacity until the dissolution of the eighth Parliament of Great Britain in April 1741.⁴ His career was certainly remarkable in that he represented Whig interests in Yorkshire for such a length of years and, although he never quite distinguished himself in the House, his sober and judicious disposition made him a popular figure. He was thoroughly reliable and, as Laurence Sterne put it, was a 'Home Born Bairn'.⁵

¹ Bernard Burke, *Landed Gentry*, London 1921, v.s. Marwood, p. 1214.

² *York Courant*, Numb. 839, Tuesday, 10 Nov. 1741 [p. 1]; cf. p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Cf. Lists of members of the House of Commons in Richard Chandler's *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, London 1742, viii, xii, Appendices.

⁵ *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 4]. York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, C. 1.

At the outset of the contested election of 1734 Turner had characteristically enraged everyone. As he had at first declined to stand for Whig interests the political wise men of York, among whom Dr. Sterne was especially active, had tossed about for a likely candidate, and were on the point of seeing their plans mature when Turner let it be known he would accept the nomination that had been tendered him. In the last Parliament he had fallen out with certain schemes of Sir Robert Walpole, and seems to have preferred the order of his conscience to the glory of his party. The Whigs were naturally distracted, since the Tory power in the House was visibly increasing. It was therefore to be expected, when Turner announced his determination to stand, that a correspondent of the Earl of Carlisle, one of the great Whig lords of Yorkshire, should have written that the

Tories are exceeding angry with Mr. T[urner], and say they should not have made an opposition but by his giving the strongest hints he would not stand, or at least not join with Sir R[obert Walpole]. I find the great ones here are full as angry with him, and wish we had pinned him to his first declaration, when he at first declared he would not stand, and seem very unwilling he should come again into Parliament. . . . A few months will now bring us to the field of battle, and I believe the struggle will be as warmly maintained on both sides as ever was known in the memory of man; and I think it demonstrable the loss of the ensuing elections will not only be the loss of the Whig interest, but no one knows what may be the fatal consequence of it.¹

¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Pt. vi, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle*, London 1897, p. 126. Sir Thomas Robinson to the Earl of Carlisle, London, 24 Dec.

1733.

Turner and the Whig chiefs reconciled, the campaigning proceeded noisily. From Sir Robert Walpole came a bribe in the offer of the ribbon of a Knight of the Bath to the squire of Kirkleatham,¹ and from Dr. Sterne a letter full of his efforts to engage as many friends as he can 'in your Interest'.² This letter suggests strongly the fact that the Doctor had taken it upon himself to manage Turner's campaign in the city of York. Fiercely, no doubt, he combated the 'Tories' allegation that Turner would forsake the Whigs at the last moment and replied that the Tory candidate, Sir Miles Stapylton,³ would withdraw.⁴ Processions and feasts took place. Ballads were made on the candidates and sung in the coffee-houses over pots of ale.⁵ Finally, the elections opened in the Guildhall and in the court of York Castle, the poll for city members beginning on 8 May and that for the Knights of the Shire on 15 May. From the city the Whig, Edward Thompson, and the Tory, Sir John Kaye, were chosen; from the county the Tory, Stapylton, and Cholmley Turner.

No sooner had the Sheriff declared Stapylton and Turner elected, and with that shut his books, but the de-

¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Pt. vi, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle*, London 1897, p. 127. Col. the Hon. Charles Howard to his brother, the Earl of Carlisle, 17 Jan. 1733-4.

² *Notes and Queries*, Jan. 1859, 2nd Series, vii, p. 15. Jaques Sterne to Cholmley Turner. MS. once preserved at Kirkleatham Hall.

³ Sir Miles Stapylton (ca. 1706-52), of Myton, near Boroughbridge. G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Baronetage*, Exeter 1903, iii, p. 50.

⁴ Thomas Lashley, *Lashley's York Miscellany*; . . . *a Collection of Letters, Ballads, Advertisements . . . about the late City and County Elections*, York 1734, p. 4. York Public Library, Y. 329; York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, B. 8.

⁵ *Id.*, p. iii. The ballads were 'pleasant to sing over a Cup of Ale at Night'.

feated Whig candidate, Sir Rowland Winn, straightway demanded a scrutiny, stating he had been unfairly put aside by the Tories. His demand was met with hisses and scoffing, but notwithstanding these protests it gained a hearing in the House of Commons during the next winter.¹ A brief investigation proved Winn's claim groundless and revealed plainly enough that the Whigs had demanded the scrutiny as a last resort. By the election of Stapylton they were plainly defeated. Indeed, after their failure before the House itself, they remembered their loss, and in the next great election, that in which Sterne figured so boldly, did not fail to use every effort to gain the power now largely wrested from them.

Throughout the election, while Dr. Sterne had sought his own promotion by displaying zeal for the Whig cause, a certain young physician had gained considerable notoriety in consequence of his abetting the Tories. He was a short, tempestuous fellow of twenty-four years by the name of John Burton, who once studied abroad under the illustrious Boerhaave, and who suddenly found himself Tory chief of the Wakefield electors in 1734. 'I was very active and vigilant in the Trust repos'd in me,' he once remarked. At York during the election he had actually guarded one of the booths set up for the voting and 'prevented several from being poll'd in an unfair Manner'.² He undoubtedly played an important part in the contest, for his name appeared among other influential citizens who had met at

¹ *The Daily Journal*, Numb. 4166, Saturday, 25 May 1734 [p. 1]; Richard Chandler, *op. cit.*, ix, pp. 147, 151-2; Hist. MSS. Com., Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Pt. vi, London 1897, pp. 145-73.

² John Burton, *British Liberty Endanger'd*, London 1749, p. 6. York Minster Library, S. xxx, 15.

York on the eve of the election to support Stapylton and Wortley. Even in this list appeared the seeds of later enmities, for here were John Burton and George Fox, the wealthy owner of Bramham Park, near Leeds, and Richard Harland, of Sutton on the Forest, the Rev. Mr. Scott, vicar of Bardsey, and Richard Sterne, of Elvington, whose diffidence to the troubles of his cousin Laurence may have risen from their opposite political sentiments. With Burton and Richard Sterne identifying themselves with the Tories it is amusing to perceive that among the Whigs who had met in behalf of Winn and Turner were Richard Osbaldeston, the Dean of York, and one 'Dr. Stern'.¹

Unwittingly enough Dr. Burton, in opposing Jaques Sterne, had now taken a path which should lead him through much suffering to a certain unenviable immortality. Immediately consequent to the election he had returned to Wakefield in time to witness a riot begun by the disappointed followers of Sir Rowland Winn. The joyous partisans of Stapylton were knocked on the head and eventually lodged in the house of correction to the scandal of decent people. Ever the scholar, Burton took down the whole transaction in a book, thereby discovering the treachery to which the Whigs had resorted.² He then married a young lady of York,³ removed thither to write two books, and founded the County Hospital close by Monk Bar in 1740. Here again he met political hostility. Appalled at the misery among the poor of York he published proposals for building the hospital and met with

¹ Thomas Lashley, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-8.

² John Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-15.

³ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1873, ii, p. 368.

favour only from the Tories. The Ministerial and Church parties turned deaf ears.¹ But George Fox, of Bramham, subscribed heavily, as did other Tories among whom were Lady Elizabeth Hastings, Richard Sterne, the Rev. Mr. Scott, and Philip Harland, of Sutton.² Jaques Sterne, it seems, had been approached and had turned off the suppliant. Politics to him were obviously preferred to charity. Burton, who was appointed physician of the institution, himself subscribed and offered a quarry in his possession for the building of the hospital.³ He had found that to be a Tory at York was to lose all sympathy with the Minster Yard. Henceforth he could seek opportunities to discomfit the church party with impunity. He did not have far to look, for he had no sooner seen his foundation begun and well-established than he fell foul of corruption in the fold of his enemies and was close at their backs to shame them in the hope that Dr. Sterne was implicated. He had discovered that the church Whigs, who were in search of funds with which to persuade electors in the contest of 1741, were pushing a scheme that might restore their confidence in the results of the coming elections. They intended that the churchwardens who were to be chosen in Easter-week of that year should all be Whigs. When these discreet friends had been appointed and advised of the virtue of silence, Dr. Sterne and others, Burton maintained, had planned to gain possession of the Sacrament Money, always given to the poor, and to devote it to the needs of the party. Burton seized upon this discovery and caused it to

¹ Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

² *An Account of the Publick Hospital . . . in the County of York*, York 1743, pp. 37-9. York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, B. 8.

³ *York Courant*, Numb. 757, Tuesday, 15 April 1740.

be published soon after in the *London Evening Post*, where one morning Jaques Sterne had the discomfort of seeing his ignominy proclaimed. By the silence regarding this scandal which reigned in the Minster Yard Burton felt himself justified in his disclosure, since 'none durst attempt to answer it: And after every Parish had received proper Intelligence, every honest Person was so shocked that so vile an Use was likely to be made of that sacred Money, that they almost unanimously agreed to vote against the Persons nominated by the other Party'.¹

Thus with knives drawn against each other, with Burton, the young physician, declaring war against the august Precentor of the Minster and Archdeacon of Cleveland,² Yorkshire prepared itself for the general election of 1741. Cholmley Turner, Knight of the Shire, who had already served in four successive Parliaments, had decided to retire into private life and to devote his remaining years to the cultivation of his estate. The tragic death at Lyons in 1739 of his son Marwood William Turner, a young man of twenty-two, then making the grand tour,³ had doubtless broken his energies and increased the ill-health with which he was afflicted. Wearied of the ceaseless discord of public life, he had attended sessions of the House until the spring of 1741, when he retired to his house in the north. There he would have busied himself with the mausoleum he had erected for his children and himself, choosing the comfort of obscurity until his death, which occurred 9 May 1757.⁴

¹ Burton, op. cit., p. 17.

² Admitted 17 Nov. 1735 in token of his political services the preceding year. Diocesan Registry, York: *Institutions of the Diocese of York, 1733-1744*, pp. 56-7.

³ J. W. Ord, op. cit., p. 375.

⁴ Id., p. 377. Three of Turner's children had died prior to 1741.

Seeking the content he had earned by a life of political activity, he would have had time upon his estates to contemplate the unhappy mixture of failure and achievement that had been his lot, had not a sudden catastrophe forced him at the age of fifty-six to fight once more the battle of the Whigs. In the spring of that year, however, no cause had yet appeared sufficient to change his intention of quitting for ever the political stage. Another Whig had offered to stand for the shire, no contest was likely, and the citizens of York were free to study with passionate interest the conflict to occur during the election of city members.

At this moment during the early spring Dr. Sterne and Burton stood forth more clearly than ever as the champions of their respective parties. The Tories had proposed their treasured Sir John Kaye and the squire of Woolley, Godfrey Wentworth, while the Whigs supported the Honourable Edward Thompson, of Marston, who, rumour said, held a place under Walpole, and the docile Sir William Milner, of Nun-Appleton.¹ Of this latter faction the Precentor was the spokesman. In those days on the west side of Coney Street stood the George Inn, an ancient hostelry with a Georgian façade supported by a colonnade, as well as a magnificent gateway for the coaches, over which rose two fine gables profusely decorated with Jacobean carvings of vines, grotesques, and a young

A son, John, was buried at Kirkleatham 29 June 1725. On the day, 27 Nov. 1739, when the burial of Marwood took place, his daughter Margaret, who had died at Newark upon Trent 5 Aug. 1714, was laid beside her brother. Turner himself was buried 18 May 1757. Cf. *Parish Register of Kirkleatham, Co. York*, Yorkshire Parish Register Society 1911, pp. 80, 83, 84, 88.

¹ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1873, ii, Davies, 'A Memoir of John Burton,' p. 408.

Bacchus. It was the principal inn of the city and one of many such gorgeous houses. Here during the months of March and April Dr. Sterne and the committee of which he was chairman were wont to meet, chiefly because the proprietor, Christopher Oldfield, was an ardent Whig and assured his guests of quiet. The committee met at regular intervals and occupied itself with lists of electors. It endeavoured to ascertain what men were indebted to their landlords for rent, or to their wholesale traders for goods, or to any other persons for money loaned. If any voters were discovered to be under these unfortunate obligations and would not vote for Thompson and Milner, then Dr. Sterne would make application to the creditors of these people in an attempt either to force from them their votes or to contribute to their ruin. 'Of this Committee a certain Dr. was mostly Chairman, an active and almost a constant Attendant of this *worthy* Committee, as indeed he generally was, wherever any Mischief was on Foot.'¹ Although Burton here painted his enemy as black as a devil, he was probably equal to the Doctor in wicked ways. His devices, one may infer, were quite as devious as Sterne's, for he was most active in encouraging the Tory party by the support of which seven years before he had distinguished himself. At the outset he promised to Kaye and Wentworth all the assistance he could render them, and seems to have performed it. Quite naturally from his medical practice at York he had come to exert a large influence over the poorer freemen of the city, an influence so gained by gratuitous visitations to the sick and 'lame Poor' that when the city election approached many of the

¹ Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

electors offered him their votes, being unable, they said, to make other requitals. Such formidable power in the young physician made him 'inveterate enemies' among the Whigs. 'I was abused by my Persecutors, who use all those ill, who dare oppose their Measures; and would have condemned me without hearing, and have actually wounded me *without any real Offence*.' ¹ If revealing Dr. Sterne's intrigues within the precincts of the Minster, if combating and subverting his interests were no real offence, then his own stated innocence before the persecutions of the Precentor is justifiable; but to attack with success the machinations of York Whigs during the thirties and forties was a parlous task and perhaps merited the miseries he later suffered at the eager hands of the Sternes.

There should be pity enough for Dr. John Burton. As Professor Cross has remarked, 'Not a Jacobite and Papist surely, his extreme Toryism exposed him to a suspicion of being both, at a time when passions ran so high that little distinction could be made between a Tory and a Jacobite and none at all between a Jacobite and a Papist.' ² With this stigma he was unfortunate enough to encounter the enmity of Dr. Jaques Sterne and came to grief. There is no need here to rehearse the steps of the humiliation he suffered following the Jacobite invasion of Scotland in 1745, for the story is too well told by Professor Cross.³ It is only necessary to point out that in Dr. Sterne he had met an adversary almost demented and possessed of a mania for persecutions. Scholars have always remarked that Sterne

¹ Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

² Wilbur L. Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, New Haven 1925, i, p. 76.

³ *Id.*, i, pp. 73-8.

persecuted his victims in order to gain promotion in the Church, but few have divined the psychological agent that drove him forward. 'His hatred and contempt for the high-flying Tory amounted to an obsession falling little short of insanity.'¹ No sooner was Burton returned to York from his visit to his estates, which lay in the march of the rebels, than he contrived to throw suspicion upon him. Laurence Sterne was the tool, if Burton's hitherto unnoticed statement is correctly interpreted.

A Relation of the Priest [Dr. Sterne], (he declared) wrote a Letter to his Friend, which arrived about Eleven o'Clock on *November 30*. The Purport of this Letter, was to tell him, that 'the Rebels were got to *Rochdale* in *Lancashire*, and were coming to *York*,' and put a Query thus, as a Postscript, *viz.* Q. *If this is not owing to your beloved or popular* (which of these two Epithets he used I am not certain) *Dr. B——n's Invitation?* This Letter one P[rie]st gave to another to run about with, and exclaim against me . . . giving it out . . . I ought to be taken into Custody.²

Dr. Sterne shook Burton between his teeth as a dog would a rat, demanding he be imprisoned as a rebel, be put in irons and be refused bail. During these days of November and December 1745 so implacable was his hatred of the little physician that he rushed about as one mad. In the Guildhall he 'made a great Blustering, and talked much, but it was *vox & præterea nihil*; he was often in such a Hurry with Party Fury, that he could not utter his Words for *vox Faucibus hæsit*,³ and he perfectly foamed at the Mouth'. The same day he signed Burton's commitment to York Castle, preferring a charge of high treason

¹ Wilbur L. Cross, *op. cit.*, i, p. 73.

² Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2.

³ *Æneid*, ii. 774.

against the foolish Doctor.¹ 'Burton's guilt seems unquestionable,' he wrote to Lord Irwin.² Owing to his efforts his victim was left to nurse his gout in the old prison until March, when he was packed up in a coach with his swollen feet out before him and sent up to London, where after an examination at the Cockpit he was dismissed, no charge being preferred against him. Shortly thereafter Jaques, LL.D., Archdeacon of Cleveland, saviour of York, and what not, offered the Lord Mayor two hundred guineas with which to purchase his freedom of the city. The proposal was rejected³ and Sterne was obliged elsewhere to squander zeal. He soon found his victims, one his renegade nephew with whom he wholly broke in 1747,⁴ and the other, a ladies' boarding-school

¹ Burton, op. cit., pp. 24-7.

² Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, London 1913, viii, p. 138. Jaques Sterne to Viscount Irwin, 7 Dec. 1745; p. 159, the same, 10 Jan. 1745-6.

³ Burton, op. cit., pp. 47-71. The *York Courant* published a full account (Numb. 1105, Tuesday, 16 Dec. 1746 [p. 3]: 'York, December 6. On Thursday last the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, Sheriffs and Twenty-Four being assembled upon Business at Ousebridge-Hall; Notice was taken that a Letter had been produc'd at the Guild Hall, the Monday before, *Directed to the Lord-Mayor*, from the Rev. Mr. Precentor of York, to the following Effect:

My Lord,

Dec. 2d, 1746.

I beg leave to inform Your Lordship, That I yet continue ambitious of the Honour I mention'd to You. As my intent in it is to serve the City and the Publick, I flatter myself that the Proposal will not be rejected. If my Offer is accepted of, besides the two hundred Guineas, I intend a Compliment of the Duke's Picture at full Length, which to your Loyal City, I take to be the strongest Proof that I am, Their most obedient Servant

Jaques Stearne.

But no Member present offering any Thing in Behalf of this Generous and Disinterested Proposal, it was Unanimously drop'd.'

⁴ *Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, pp. 102, 95.

which he attacked as a cradle for Papists.¹ In neither instance was his wrath either in proportion to the triviality of the offence or even to be justified. He hounded the Catholic gentry of York and drove them away,² thereby impairing the resources of the Assembly Rooms in Blake Street. A wit, most likely Dr. Francis Drake, the illustrious antiquary and Tory, remarked this fact in the *York Courant*,³ and scored the 'reverend Gentleman' and 'little Doctor' 'who left unattempted no Method of Persecution, in his Power, to banish the Roman-Catholic Gentry, who, by spending the Winter here, circulated amongst us many thousand Pounds yearly.' Likewise the affair of 'a certain pious Doctor and two Religious Ladies' which came 'under the Cognizance of a Superior Court', namely Sterne's attack on the Protestant Nunnery in Micklegate, was ridiculed in the *Courant*⁴ with the vain hope of shaming Dr. Sterne into some sort of restraint. The Precentor was not such a man. Burton it was who had advised him 'to exchange his Politicks, for Piety——To become a Champion for *Religion*, instead of being an Advocate for *Men in Power*, and employ more of his Time in *that* . . . and then, he might stand *some* Chance of becoming *exalted* according to his Merits';⁵ but Sterne could do no more than persecute and come up glowing with expectation of honours. Following his denunciation of the school he obtained the second

¹ *Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 92; *The Case of the Mistresses or Governesses of a Boarding-School of York* [York 1750]. York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, B. 8.; Cross, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 68-9.

² Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³ Numb. 1214, Tuesday, 17 Jan. 1748-9 [p. 2].

⁴ *York Courant*, Numb. 1251, Tuesday, 3 Oct. 1749 [p. 3].

⁵ Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4.

prebendal stall at Durham¹ and panted for a bishopric which never came. Of the oppression he at length brought upon York society there remains an interesting letter written by Dorothea Wentworth to her son in 1753. She was the wife of the Tory, Godfrey Wentworth, and daughter of Sir Lyonel Pilkington,² the baronet who was High Sheriff on the occasion of the election of 1741.³ I give this letter, not so much because it betrays the influence of Jaques Sterne upon York society, but because it reveals a side of that curious and provincial group in which Sterne was accustomed to move. It was written by a lady who was the wife of a squire and the daughter of a baronet. In point of illiteracy she surpasses Tabitha Bramble. She is a veritable Mrs. Shandy in silks; yet not even Mrs. Shandy could have written this letter.

I cod like to be with you at Woolley a little hife you staye thear for I know I must have a life like a dooge I have ad wone bad a nofe at York to have spent so much money en hit, and I can a shoueur you a great maney false undesarven things sade on me and all amongst the sarvents; We ad a good esemble on Monday last, Mr. Wentworth of Braton was thear and Mrs. Lane from Bramon,⁴ and a good many

¹ In September 1752, being in ill-health, Jaques Sterne journeyed to Bath by way of London, where he applied to the Duke of Newcastle for the vacant stall at Durham (British Museum, Add. MSS. 32, 724. f. 299). In June 1753 he was 'at the end of all possible Indulgences for non-residence' and was 'under a necessity of returning to York' without the gift of the prebend (Add. MSS. 32, 732, f. 135), but he received it in May 1755; cf. *York Courant*, Numb. 1543, Tuesday, 20 May 1755 [p. 2].

² *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1893, xii, p. 186.

³ Godfrey R. Park, *Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, Hull 1886, p. 301.

⁴ Harriet, daughter and heiress of Robert, Baron Bingley, of Bramham Park, born in 1705. She married George Fox-Lane, one of the Tories of Yorkshire.

strangers; we have good concorts . . . the young officers are all gone to Leedes and Wackefield only left all the ould men at York, I beleve we have fife hundred ould makes at York and as maney moor ould wemen besides, all very crose and dose a great deale of mischefe en the Toune. . . . I fancy we shall have but a then toune at York thesse wenter, the place his groone so senscorrisse a place I do not wonder at het, you can scarsley speeke to aney bodey with ought sencer I do a shour you with ought joke.

York, 16 November 1753.¹

¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, London 1903, ii, p. 424.

II

WITH the political imbroglio of 1741, which set London wiseacres talking in loud fashion, Laurence Sterne is supposed to have been concerned. Rumours from the last decades of the eighteenth century have occasionally stated that Sterne at this time was attached to the Whig cause and writing articles that seemingly had not survived the devouring indifference of time. The editors of the *Monthly Review* for October 1775 stated that they had heard 'of his writing a periodical electioneering paper at York, in defence of the Whig interest',¹ while John Croft, the antiquarian brother of Sterne's friend and counsellor, Stephen Croft, of Stillington, set down in 1795 more detailed information. In his youth he had known Sterne and recollected that 'in his younger years he was a good deal employed by his Uncle, in writing political Papers and Pamphlets in favour of Sir Robert Walpole's Administration'. Croft added that a quarrel had later ensued between the Prebendary and his uncle, and that Sterne had given it out 'as a reason in the publick Coffee House, that it arose from that he would not continue to write periodical papers for his Uncle'.²

Faint hints across the night of years are these recollections. No more definite statement survived. At length the Yorkshire scholar, Robert Davies, in exploring the history of the York press, believed he had chanced upon the paper for which Sterne wrote, but, since he could find no copy of it, he was unable to investigate his supposition. As a

¹ *Monthly Review*, October 1775, vol. liii, p. 344.

² John Croft to Caleb Whitefoord, *Whitefoord Papers*, ed. W. A. S. Hewins, Oxford 1898, p. 225.

result later biographers have resorted to their ingenuity to describe Sterne's political career and have been obliged to fall back upon the word of John Croft. Fortunately, however, the paper for which Sterne did write can now be known. The details of his activities in 1741 now stand forth clearly and reveal him as intimately as does the biography of his last years.

In the month of April of the year 1741, four days before the dissolution of Parliament on the twenty-fifth,¹ Cholmley Turner, who had sat as one of the Knights of the Shire, formally presented to his constituents his permanent withdrawal from politics.

I think it my Duty (ran the laconic advertisement in the *York Courant*) to return you my most hearty Thanks, for the great Honour done me, in three Times appointing me your Representative in Parliament . . . I hope my Behaviour in Parliament has been such, as to give no just Ground of Censure. . . . I now beg leave to resign to whom you judge qualify'd for such a Trust.²

The reasons for his withdrawal were his disintegrating loyalty to Walpole and the shock he had received by the recent death of his heir, Marwood William Turner. Thus with Turner no longer a candidate it was necessary for the Whigs to set up another man, lest the Tories, having again nominated Sir Miles Stapylton, produce a second candidate. The balance of power, however, was preserved by the advent of a Whig, Charles Howard, Viscount Morpeth,³ who with Stapylton on 6 May was quietly and

¹ Richard Chandler, *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, London 1743, xiii, p. 1.

² *York Courant*, Numb. 810, 21 Apr. 1741 [p. 3].

³ *Id.*, Numb. 772, Tuesday, 29 July 1740 [p. 3]. Advertisement dated 24 July 1740, over nine months before the election.

unanimously elected Knight of the Shire.¹ Howard was the son and heir of the Earl of Carlisle,² who had allied himself with the wing of the Whigs in opposition to Walpole. Being only in his twenty-second year, he was probably too young to have any serious political opinions, and, when no more than a tool of his father, he had come forward to begin a career in Parliament, for which his family entertained the greatest hopes. The expectations were soon to be crushed, for they disregarded his physical incapacity to undertake the work of politics. Within a month of his election he had fallen 'dangerously ill'. At the beginning of June Cæsar Ward, the Tory printer of the *York Courant*, was prevailed upon by friends of the viscount to assure the public that Morpeth was 'in a fair way of Recovery'.³ He progressed so favourably for a few weeks that Turner expressed great satisfaction over his condition,⁴ but shortly he suffered a relapse and died of tuberculosis at Castle Howard, 9 August 1741.⁵

For the Whigs, as well as for the quiet of the county, the death of this young lord was little less than a catastrophe. In a sense more ironic than Cæsar Ward had intended the tragedy was 'equally a public as a private Loss', for Morpeth was scarce decently buried when Yorkshire plunged into a violent struggle. The seriousness of the situation was obvious to all. Should the county fail to return a Whig member, the Tory power in Parliament might be

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 813, Tuesday, 12 May 1741 [p. 3].

² G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, London 1913, iii, p. 36.

³ *York Courant*, Numb. 817, Tuesday, 9 June 1741 [p. 3].

⁴ Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Pt. vi, *Report on Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle*, London 1897, p. 198. Col. the Hon. Charles Howard to Earl of Carlisle, 1 July 1741.

⁵ *York Courant*, Numb. 826, Tuesday, 11 Aug. 1741 [p. 3].

gravely increased, so feeble did the Whigs feel themselves to be at this juncture. At all costs a Whig must be elected, since the Tories on their side would not fail to seize this opportunity to nominate their own candidate to join with Stapylton in the overthrow of Walpole. The consequence was a contested election, the fame of which is not yet forgotten.

During the last week in August both parties were in a state of confusion. They held meetings, and none knew what would be the outcome. Then on Tuesday, 1 September, Cæsar Ward published an important notice.

On Saturday last the Gentlemen of the *Court-Party* had a Meeting at the George in Coney-street, to nominate a Person to succeed Lord Morpeth as Knight of the Shire: But who will be so hardy as to stand upon *that Interest*, is as great a Secret to themselves as to the Publick.—George Fox, Esq; of Bramham-Park stands Candidate upon the COUNTRY—INTEREST.¹

The entrance into the contest of George Fox was indeed a formidable matter. When a Yorkshireman compared him with his likely opponent, Cholmley Turner, he straightway perceived him the younger and the wealthier, if not actually, as the Whigs represented him, a supporter of Irish interests. His sole connexion with Yorkshire was his possession of the expansive estate of Bramham Park, which lay near the city of Leeds, since by family he was certainly an Irishman. His grandfather upon his mother's side had been Sir George Lane, of Tulske, county Roscommon, an eminent politician in his day, and one who had served as Secretary of State for Ireland and who had

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 829, Tuesday, 1 Sept. 1741 [p. 3].

been created Viscount Lanesborough, county Longford, in 1676.¹ Lord Lanesborough's daughter, the Honourable Frances Lane, had married in 1691 Henry Fox, of Birmingham, whose own father, apart from holding a commission in the army in Ireland, was thoroughly identified with that country both by life and maternal blood.² It thus happened that George Fox, son of Henry Fox and grandson of Viscount Lanesborough, inherited from both his parents those Irish sympathies for which Yorkshire Whigs straightway condemned him. That he actually preferred Ireland to Yorkshire, however, is barely credible, for, although he possessed large estates in the former land, the Whigs were certain to trump up this charge against him. He was born, as was stated during his campaign,³ in the parish of St. James's, Westminster, but was not baptized there, since his name does not appear in the register of the parish. His schooling, although he never entered St. Peter's,⁴ he received likewise in Westminster, and when, 15 May 1713, he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford,⁵ at the age of seventeen, he was described as a resident of St. James's. Up to this time it is probable that he lived in London, and never saw Ireland save during an occasional visit. He married, 12 July 1731, at Somerset House Chapel, a Yorkshire heiress, Harriet, only daughter of Robert, Baron Bingley,⁶ and thereby, like a wise man,

¹ Burke, *Dormant and Extinct Peerages*, London 1883, p. 313.

² Id., *Landed Gentry*, London 1925, p. 679, *v.s.* Lane-Fox.

³ *York Courant*, Numb. 830, Tuesday, 8 Sept. 1741 [p. 3].

⁴ Joseph Welch, *Westminster School Lists*, London 1852. Fox is not mentioned.

⁵ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, Oxford 1891, ii, p. 526, *v.s.* Fox.

⁶ G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, London 1912, ii, p. 178, *v.s.*

acquired that wealth and county influence which distinguished him throughout his life. Lord Bingley, who had begun his career as Robert Benson, of Wrenthorpe, Yorkshire, had ended it three months previously possessed of a barony, the acres of Bramham Park, where, it was said, one could ride 'near two miles in the gardens',¹ and a fortune of £100,000 as well as an additional £7,000 a year from his lands. Lord Bingley had represented the city of York from 1705 to 1713, and had been raised to the peerage 21 July 1713. He had been prominent at Court, being Chancellor of the Exchequer during the last years of the Queen and, in addition, ambassador to the Court of Madrid. Since his worldly goods and political prestige he had bequeathed to his daughter,² her young husband upon his marriage found himself almost encumbered with interests. Fox had but a few years before succeeded to the Irish estates of his uncle, the second Viscount Lanesborough,³ and, like the boy who once ate too much and split quite in half, he now saw himself dutifully bound to abet two irreconcilable causes, that of Ireland and that of Yorkshire. Although he pointed to Bramham Park in

Bingley. Lord Bingley, as his will shows, was probably the father of the notorious soldier and poetaster, John Burgoyne, cf. *Bramham Park*, written in 1745 by Francis Fawkes, *Works of the English Poets*, ed. Alexander Chalmers, London 1810, xvi, pp. 235-8.

¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland*, London 1901, vi, p. 182, 25 Apr. 1745.

² Cf. Lord Bingley's will, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Probate Registry, Somerset House, London: Isham 86. Proved 13 Apr. 1731.

³ In 1724. G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, London 1912, ii, p. 178, v.s. Bingley. Fox had brought suit against his aunt, Mary, Viscountess Lanesborough, to recover estates bequeathed to him by his grandfather, Public Record Office, *Proceedings in Chancery 1714 to 1758*, 49, 2580.

defending his rights to represent the county, he could not without difficulty disguise his possessions in Ireland, and surely he would have lost all favour at home had he then adopted the name of Lane which he did, in 1751, by special Act of Parliament.

Following his marriage Fox for a time allied himself with the Duke of Newcastle,¹ and from that year until 1741 represented together with Henry Fox, who was to become Lord Holland, the borough of Hindon in Wiltshire.² In 1757 he served as Lord Mayor of York,³ represented that city from 1742 to 1761, and in the year following, in reward for his services and affluence, was created Baron Bingley. The one son of his marriage, Robert Fox-Lane, died in 1768. Therefore with no heirs to his title his peerage became extinct at his death, which occurred at Bramham, 22 February 1773,⁴ in his seventy-seventh year. His political activities, in so far as they concern themselves with Yorkshire, seem mainly to have been the result of his wife's influence. In character and thought he was a man of aggressive energy and stolid Tory sentiments. During the present struggle he conducted his campaign with enthusiasm and, when once he had gained his seat, brought forward his son as a parliamentary candidate. Whether or not his interests were Irish, and therefore pernicious to Yorkshire, is after all no great matter for debate.

¹ British Museum, Add. MSS. 22,248, ff. 161, 167.

² Richard Chandler, *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, London 1742, xii, Appendices; *An Exact List of All those who voted for and against the late Convention*, London 1739, Brit. Mus. 104. K. 30.

³ Joseph Foster, *County Families of Yorkshire, West Riding*, London 1874, i, v.s. Lane-Fox, of Bramham Park.

⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1773, vol. xliii, pp. 154-5.

It is sufficient that while York returned him for nearly twenty years, it exploded the calumny which the Sternes now levelled against him.

The meeting of the Whigs at the George Inn on Saturday, 29 August, to which Ward had referred so contemptuously in the *Courant*, proved big with possibilities. Not only did it forecast an illustrious career to a certain young prebendary of York but, what for the moment was the more imperative matter, the possible failure of the Whigs to select a candidate. They attended to read the outcome of the meeting, they were thirsting for some definite result, and among the Whigs Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle numbered himself. Owning extensive lands in Yorkshire, which gave him a right from his dignity to guide the destiny of his party in that county, he was as concerned as any Whig in the kingdom to learn the outcome of the meeting, and was hourly expecting intelligence about it from his agent, Andrew Wilkinson, at Boroughbridge.¹ On the twenty-third Wilkinson had written to him, but had sent no more cheerful account of the Whigs than that they had already urged Cholmley Turner to stand again for the Shire, and as yet did not at all know his decision.² Most probably Turner had been able to make none. A week later Wilkinson, who was writing the letter Newcastle was impatient to receive, could give him no greater satisfaction than he had previously given. There had been, he acknowledged, a crowded meeting at the George, that had proved to be 'the most numerous y^t has

¹ *English Historical Review*, July 1897, xii, p. 457.

² Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,697, f. 448, Boroughbridge, 23 Aug. 1741.

been seen a great while'. The nobility, the gentry, and the clergy had all come together and had talked much. Perhaps the gathering resembled Hogarth's savage picture of an Election Dinner with the shouting of party songs and its great drinking of punch.¹ Perhaps a wig or two had been lost in the confusion, or a chair and its ecclesiastical occupant suddenly upset. In turn each of the influential gentry was requested to accept an immediate nomination. Each quickly declined, at which the governors, among whom was certainly Jaques Sterne, pitched finally upon the absent Turner, and on the spot unanimously agreed to call him forth. 'All our Endeavours hitherto,' Wilkinson wrote to the Duke, 'to prevail wth him to declare himself have proved ineffectual.' Turner appeared 'extreamly averse to engage himself . . . in his own behalf' and made it difficult for his constituents to support him whole-heartedly 'wthout his doing something to help himself, or addressing Himself in some manner or Other to the Freeholders for their Votes'.² The man was as undecided as Hamlet. Yet, notwithstanding the reluctance to come forth that he plainly revealed, he was unanimously chosen the Whig candidate and promised the support of those present. Here in the large banqueting room of the George the young prebendary was wondering what he could possibly say in his newspaper of this candidate, this almost hopeless candidate, while the others were congratulating themselves upon the probable advent of the man they had chosen. These were the great Whigs of the county and many of them were Sterne's intimate com-

¹ Jacob Larwood, *The History of Signboards*, London 1867, p. 388: 'punch . . . was the Whig drink, whilst the Tories adhered to sack, claret, and canary.'

² Add. MSS. 32,697, f. 519, Boroughbridge, 31 Aug. 1741.

panions. There was above all Jaques himself, and there was Osbaldeston, the Dean of York, to whom Sterne dedicated his first printed sermon;¹ the Rev. Mr. Hitch, who was to overheat himself during the coming election and leave a prebendal stall to which Sterne would be preferred;² Viscount Fauconberg, of Coxwold, who was to become Sterne's generous patron;³ the Rev. Mr. Berdmore, whose turns at preaching in the Minster Sterne was often glad to accept in later years.⁴ There were present also two other clergymen friendly to the Vicar of Sutton, one Charles Cowper, a canon residentiary,⁵ and Francis Blackburne, Vicar of Richmond, a future correspondent.⁶ There were all these and there was also Laurence Sterne.⁷

¹ *The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zerephath, consider'd*, York 1747.

² Thomas Gent, *The Life of Thomas Gent*, London 1832, p. 194; Certificate of institution of Sterne as Prebendary of North Newbald, Brit. Mus., Add. Charters, 16, 161.

³ Thomas Belasyse (1699-1774). In 1760 Sterne was presented by Lord Fauconberg to the perpetual curacy of Coxwold.

⁴ William Berdmore (d. 1784); cf. *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1870, i, p. 305; Cross, op. cit., i, p. 153, ii, p. 286.

⁵ Charles Cowper (1692-1774); cf. *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1870, i, pp. 300-1.

⁶ Francis Blackburne (1705-87); cf. *Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, pp. 76-84; J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Pt. I, to 1751, Cambridge 1922, i, p. 160.

⁷ *A List of the Names of the Lords, Gentlemen and Clergy, who met at the George in Coney-street, York, on Saturday the 29th Day of August, 1741 . . . at which Meeting Cholmley Turner, Esq; was unanimously agreed upon*, York: John Jackson in Grape-Lane: Where may be had a Weekly News-Paper, call'd The York Gazetteer. Fol. 1 page. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,697, f. 522.

III

THE PRESENCE of Sterne at this meeting was not fortuitous. In the early weeks of the year 1741, when Yorkshire was to witness one of the greatest elections in its history, Sterne stood more than ready to make his fortune in the world. He was in his twenty-seventh year, was possessed of modest preferment in the Church at York, and had recently been so unwise as to marry a lady as poor as himself. Largely abandoned by his relations in his younger days, he had entered Jesus College, Cambridge, as a sizar, and had there tried to benefit from an education, the cost of which, he wrote, was 'too Scantily defray'd by my Cosin Sterne¹ wth only 30 P^{ds} a Year, & the last Year not pay'd, but with the Money I borrowed'.² Following those years of poverty and his graduation in January 1736-7, he was admitted to the order of deacons³ and instituted by the Bishop of Lincoln to the curacy of St. Ives, a village near Huntingdon.⁴ So mean a preferment no doubt irritated his ambition and urged him to seek aid from his uncle, Dr. Jaques Sterne, who was then one of the dignitaries of the diocese of York. He had not long to wait, and did not, as Professor Cross surmises, remain at St. Ives 'for a year and a half',⁵ for the Doctor listened to

¹ Richard Sterne (1707-44), of Elvington, a Tory.

² The text taken from a manuscript copy in my possession of the famous letter to his uncle, 8 Apr. 1751. The copy was made by Godfrey Bosville, of Gunthwaite, an acquaintance of Sterne; cf. *Works of Laurence Sterne*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 104.

³ 6 Mar. 1736-7, Brit. Mus., Add. Charters, 16, 158.

⁴ Wilbur L. Cross, *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, New Haven 1925, i. p. 34.

⁵ *Id.*, i, p. 34.

him and procured for him a humble appointment near York, an appointment not hitherto noticed, and one that is important as the entrance of Sterne into the Church of York. Within a year of his admittance to the curacy of St. Ives he came to York and, on 18 February 1737-8, subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles 'in order to be licenced to perform the Office of an Assistant Curate in the Parish Church of Catton in the County and Diocese of York'.¹ In this large but dreary parish, situate some seven miles to the east of the city, where, in 1756, his friend John Blake was to be Rector,² he left no memorials of his office, and remained there only until August of that year, when, following his admission into the priesthood,³ he was instituted to the vicarage of Sutton on the Forest⁴ and, in January 1740-1, to the prebend of Givendale,⁵ two preferments he received through the efforts of his uncle.⁶ The income from these appointments, although not above £75 a year, would have been quite sufficient, had he not been obliged from the poor state of his health to keep a curate at Sutton,⁷ and had he not married Elizabeth Lumley. She had more or less 'asked him the question herself',⁸ while

¹ Diocesan Registry, York: *Subscription Book 1722-1757*, under date 18 Feb. 1737-8.

² Diocesan Registry: *Institutions of the Diocese of York 1755-1768*, p. 2.

³ 20 Aug. 1738, Brit. Mus., Add. Charters 16, 160.

⁴ 24 Aug. 1738, id., 16, 159.

⁵ 16 Jan. 1740-1. *Subscription Book 1722-1757*, under date.

⁶ 'I retain that Sense of the Service you did me at my first Setting out in the World.' Sterne to his uncle, *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 107; *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Letters*, p. 6.

⁷ Richard Wilkinson licensed to serve cure at Sutton, 17 Dec. 1740. *Institutions 1733-1744*, p. 136.

⁸ *The Whitefoord Papers*, ed. W. A. S. Hewins, Oxford 1898, p. 226.

at the Assembly Rooms one day, whence they went to Dean Osbaldeston and were married.¹ This cousin of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu was possessed of expensive tastes and was no sooner married but she began that clamour for money, which she never gave over until his death. The 'large ruinous House',² attached to the living at Sutton, was no fit place for her. In consequence Sterne straightway found himself recording his financial troubles in the Parish Register, where he lamented the cost of 'Stukoing and Bricking the Hall . . . Plastering, Underdrawing & Jobbery' and 'God knows what',³ a list of expenses that must be paid with money he did not quite possess. Since to his uncle it was that he owed whatever preferments he was then graced with, it was therefore natural that he turn again to the Precentor and offer his services in a matter only too dear to his uncle, namely, the coming elections in May of 1741. Being then 'unhackneyed and unpractised in the world',⁴ he could regard his uncle only as the kindly genius of his present success, and could not fathom the motives of the Doctor's charity. Jaques Sterne had mounted noticeably in the church by suiting men to his purpose, and with the assistance of Laurence thought to mount still higher. Since from his support of Turner in 1734 he had been made an archdeacon,⁵ he now expected

¹ 30 Mar. 1741. *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1875, iii, *Register of Marriages in York Minster*, p. 93.

² *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 104.

³ Cross, *op. cit.*, i, p. 49.

⁴ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xi, p. 28.

⁵ On 17 Nov. 1735, somewhat over a year from the election, Jaques Sterne was admitted and instituted to the Precentorship of the Minster, to the Canonry and Prebend of Driffild, and to the Archdeaconry of Cleveland. Diocesan Registry: *Institutions of the Diocese of York 1733-1744*, pp. 56-7.

from his nephew's support of him to be consecrated bishop. The moment and the nephew were now at hand, the one propitious, the other clever and in need. He approached Sterne concerning a project already developed in his mind. The nephew agreed. A few days later a printer of strong Whig sentiments was secured, and the Vicar of Sutton commenced his career as journalist for the ministerial cause.

The electioneering paper thus established by the Sternes was called the *York Gazetteer*.¹ By its name it immediately suggested the leading Whig organs of London, the *Daily Gazetteer*, and the Court paper, the *London Gazette*. Its purpose it was frank in stating, for it was 'partly set on Foot, to correct the weekly Poison of the York-Courant', and its supporters 'hoped that the Well-Wishers to the Cause of *Liberty* and *Protestantism* will give it Encourage-

¹ The *York Gazetteer*:/[woodcut design of angels supporting arms]. Published by JOHN JACKSON, in Grape-Lane./N^o 41./[Rule]/Tuesday, December 15. 1741./[Rule]/. Folio in one sheet, measuring 24 × 35.5 cm., and consisting of pages 1 to 4 unnumbered. The print is distributed into three columns separated by two vertical rules. Colophon: YORK: Printed by John Jackson in *Grape-Lane*, by whom Advertisements are taken in.

This Paper is also sold, and Advertisements taken in by Mr. *Joseph Smith* in *Barnsley*, Mr. *Romans* and Mr. *Barker* in *New-Malton*, Mr. *Richard Parkinson*, Grocer, in *Pickering* Mr. *George Dinmoor* in *Hull*, Mr. *Henry Stockton* at *Kirbymoorside*, Mr. *John Bland* at *Scarborough* and *Newil Hodgson* at *Knaresburgh*.

N.B. This Paper not only contains the fullest and most disinterested Accounts of *Foreign* and *Domestic* Affairs, but will likewise be further Recommended by a Political Essay, at least every other Week, which will be printed in no other News Paper in *Great Britain*. As this Paper is partly set on Foot, to correct the Weekly Poison of the York-Courant, 'tis hoped that the Well-Wishers to the Cause of *Liberty* and *Protestantism* will give it Encouragement [p. 4]. York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, C.1.

Published by JOHN JACKSON, in Grape-Lane.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15. 1741.

To the PRINTER of the YORK GAZETTEER.

AS in a Nation, so in a County, where it is divided into two Parties, unless a Man be so great as to be able to form a third, independent and superior to either of the Other; it must be either no great Fear of Him, or no great Love, either Covetous or Self-Interest, which prevent his Siding with one of the Parties already form'd; he would be consistent Neutral, member of the Party can be imagin'd to speak to him with Confidence, so as that he may be able to apply proper Advice, in any considerable Emergency; and consequently in that Situation he must necessarily be useful to his County, Advice being the only thing in which Neutrality ever proved to be the serviceable; Hence the reasonableness that both Parties should look upon the Neutral Man as an Enemy.

Hence a Person of Moderation, who has really the Good of his Country at Heart, would doubtless take some time for Considering which Side to join with, in such a Division; neither of 'em probably in itself being appearing perfectly enough to justify an Intere Religion of Himself in not siding to abandon'd, but that many Arguments may be alledg'd in its Defence and Support. — Suppose such a Man, with great regard to the two Candidates for the County in the ensuing Election, let each be fairly examin'd by every honest Heart (still in Suspence) both in his private Capacity as a Gentleman and in his more publick one as a Gentleman supported by such a Party.

As to understanding they are necessarily be support'd equal, one one Ad and one one Speech of either having ever yet appear'd by which it could be said, that the other was his Inferior in this Point; for in an Election of Party which one Side will always find fault with and the other as Constantly commends, the Behaviour of either will in no degree settle him in Superiority in judgment, unless in case of a fair and every degree of Justice in one Party, that he's a Fool, and of every one in the other, that he's a Man of Wisdom and Understanding.

As to Fortune, they have both large Estates, one chiefly or wholly in the heart of the County has't propounded to support, absolutely free and independent, and which therefore nothing can reasonably be imagin'd either to surprise or bribe him from the defence of; the Estate of the other has't part in the same County, but absolute dependent either upon the Will or the Life of a Person Variable by Sex and possibly not very healthful by Contention; the other Yarn is known in a County whose Interest in many respects appears to be of England in general and of Yorkshire in particular.

They have both set in Parliament before; one has constantly Yarn according as propositions were made or Circumstances alter'd, without Scrupling to derive from or even oppose the Party he was imagin'd to have oppos'd; whenever that Party appear'd in him otherwise from the good of his Country or the reason of things; the Other has always resolutely stuck to his Party, whenever their Proposals were, as however Contrary to the Nature of Things; as the good of the Land and particularly when it was oppos'd, whether the Irish Yarn should be Manu'dard in England, be Voted in direct Opposition to the Advantage of the English Nation.

One of the Candidates has appear'd publicly in a Written Capacity, in defence of the King and Liberties of England, against the attacks of a piousd Heir to the Crown, whose very Principles, whether in Civil or Religious Matters, are directly opposite to English Liberty and the English Constitution; the Other has not scrupled to side with that very People, who, tho' they were not themselves actually engag'd in that Rebellion, yet at least join

Insert with those that were, and concert Measures, unanimously with them, to oppose the very Persons whose Worthy Patriotism oppos'd that Rebellion, thus much with regard to the Personal Qualifications of each.

As to the Party by which they are supported, each doubtless possesses a great many very good Qualities, but so long as human Nature is by Confusion subject to error, a Wise Man will say it is down as an absolute Certainty, that Faction is not to be met with in either; and that that part therefore it is to be prefer'd whose failings upon a full Comparison appear to be fewest in Number or least in degree.

What has been said fails with in One of the Parties is an Article — Scheme and a Convention; but He roost against the first, and the latter is blameworthy upon no other account than as it gave time to prepare, to an Enemy before imagin'd to be so provided; which tho' a defect in Policy, may easily be excus'd upon the Score of Ourselves being not sufficiently provided. But what is this to join with a Party, professedly openly by Principle and by Religion, an Enemy to the King and Constitution and which has already actually drawn its adherents into open Rebellion in support of a Family, under whose Government England cannot but be a family (which were it upon the Throne without the most monstrous ingratitude could not be so) in the most subject and slavish Manner, to the dictates of that Crown by whose perfidious Allowance it has so long been supported.

As to a Standing Army, Considering that the lower People have to great a Sight and Contempt of Authority as not to be refrin'd from Committing the most Outrageous Insults upon our Laws and Government whenever Opportunity Offers, * and considering the very great Number of Enemies the present Family upon the Throne has in the Kingdom, none who are hearty Friends to it can possibly imagine that such an Army was not absolutely necessary for its Defence and Support; and let it be added that this Family unsupported, both the Religion and Liberty of England must necessarily share with it. Consequently for this the Party contrary not to be blamed at all, but directly the contrary.

If it be said that power ill used ought always to be opposed and by every Person, I grant it; but not in the setting up of a Power ten Times worse in its Place; but that the abuse of Power deserves a little Examination. In a divided Nation, where the Superiority has not been gain'd by any indirect or dishonourable Practices, which is allow'd on all hands to be the State of England at present, tho' it is certain the Superior Party may possibly be in the wrong, yet the Inferior is much more Suspicious; as it may be justly imagin'd to oppose chiefly in order to obtain false Places of Profit and Honour as the Other a already possid'd of.

In the next place the Inferior, not being the siding part in the Constitution, has only what is already done, and judges therefore altogether by the event; a hence in many instances they blame the very thing which themselves would have desired; or they interpose before Matters are fully settled, and frequently prevent their succeeding, where Success without loss interruption had been.

* This was not mention'd at Newcastle last Year, when a private Bill utterly rejected last Year, was now in the opinion of the Tories and many of the King's leaders had the Impudence to pull that Chief Magistrate, one of his Chair to Place himself to in, and impudently declare that they were their Majesty, who it is generally thought the Tories had have been led to offer, if a party of Soldiers had not been immediately interpos'd: A thing of the same Nature has since been done in it and happened a few years ago in Scotland.

tables: it is also certain that a Government cannot hold without Taxes, and that People who are Tax'd, right or wrong, always Complains; hence a never failing Fund of discontent and exclamation against the sitting part of the Constitution.

I shall only add one Thing more, the inferior Party must be oppos'd to make proposals always plausible in Appearance at least; whilst the Superior may be imagin'd less Cautious in Appearance so they be really so, in thinking themselves in less Danger of Misconceiv'd; but whoever has read the History of the little States of Greece, must have observ'd that Philip destroy'd the Liberty of all those brave People by this very Means only; the Proposals he made in their Assemblies, having always a plausible Appearance, drew in the Common People, and such as judg'd only by Appearance, inevitably to oppose and at last to destroy those Persons, whose Honour and Integrity made 'em the real Friends of their Country, without two eyes a desire of Appearing so; and who would have transform'd Freedom and happine's to their Policy, had not such plausible Appearances suddenly deserv'd 'em of the power which was necessary to that end.

These are the reasons of a Yorkshire Man, for choosing to be of the Whig Party in general, and of those Mr. Turner in particular at the ensuing Election; to him that shall produce Stronger Arguments for the other Candidate, and the opposing Party, I solemnly promise one Convert at least.

D.

Friday's Post, December 8.

From Wm's Letter, St. James's, the London Evening Post, and other Papers.

Petersburgh, Nov. 10.

TH^O the Persian Ambassador here contradi- cted the News which was publish'd from the Porte, of a great Action that had happened between the Persians and the Mooluccians of Baghelata, to the Disadvantage of the former; nevertheless the Court has just receiv'd a Confirmation of that News, with these Particulars; viz. That the Persians had 10,000 Men kill'd on the Spot, and that Kouli Khan was oblig'd to retire into his Dominions with the shattered Remains of his Army. This Day Mr. Finch, the British Minister here, dispatch'd an Express to London, with the Ratification of the Treaty which he has concluded with this Court. The Viceroy of the Kingdom of Sicily, who is as well receiv'd there as formerly; and on the 7th, which was the Anniversary of the Great Duke's Accession to the Regency, her Imperial Highness celebrated the same at his Palace of Wallis Obrow, where the Viceroy's Marshal gave a Serenade, with a Ball and supper, at which the Great Duke, the Duke of Bruns- wick her Husband, and the whole Court were present and her Highness did the Marshal the Honour to open the Ball with him.

Spain, Nov. 10. The Army which the King has assembled in Albranca is 1, join some thousands of Spaniards on the Frontiers of the Mountain, and then is the Possession of the principal Part of that Dochy. The Court has dispatch'd a Courier to the Great Duke de Viqueville, the King's Minister at the Court of Parma to the King of Sardinia relative to the Affairs of Italy. His Excellency is charging him with a system Answer from his Sardinian Minister, Proposals.

Lybion, Nov. 14. The Spaniards have gain'd some Victory whereby it can be seen that they intend to do.

ment'.¹ The paper was already appearing in the spring of 1741 during the campaigns of Morpeth and Stapylton for the shire, and of the rival candidates for the city. Dr. Sterne, who had secured his printer and journalist, seems to have been the managing director, although he kept his person aloof from the paper probably on account of his extreme occupation in combating the devices of Dr. Burton in the campaign for the city. Thus at least appears to have been the situation. The printer was John Jackson, a member of a large family which from the present election for the city down to that of 1758 voted to a man for the Whig cause.² Jackson was somewhat malleable in the hands of Dr. Sterne, since he was beginning his career as a York printer. He had obtained the freedom of the city by patrimony in 1734; but did not set up his printing establishment until this year.³ His office adjoined Coffee-Yard in Grape-Lane, a street previously given over to the licensed harlots of the city, and from here on Tuesday, 10 March 1741,⁴ only three weeks before Sterne's marriage,

¹ Cf. p. 36, note 1.

² Pick's Edition of the *State of the Poll for Members of Parliament, to represent the City of York*, York 1807, p. 37n.

³ Robert Davies, *A Memoir of the York Press*, Westminster 1868, p. 314. John Jackson (1705-6-71) must not be confused with his father, John Jackson (?1678-1744). In the city election of 1741 the elder, residing in Grape Lane, and the younger, in Stonegate, were both styled printer and voted for the Whigs (*Poll for Members in Parliament for the City of York*, York: Printed by John Jackson 1741, p. 35. York Minster Library, Hailstone Collection, C. 8.). As the elder printer in 1741 was about sixty-two years of age, his son was the man to set up a new paper in his father's shop. Cf. *Register of the Freemen of the City of York*, ii, 1559-1759, Surtees Society 1900, vol. cii, pp. 180, 240; *Register of St. Michael le Belfrey, York*, Pt. II, Yorkshire Parish Register Society 1901, pp. 75, 77, 103, 258, 281.

⁴ By computation.

he issued the first number of the *York Gazetteer*. Only two copies of this paper have come to my notice,¹ the most important being one that I discovered in the York Minster Library. It is a folio of four pages, and bears for a device a preposterous cut of two angels holding the arms of the city of York. It is a solitary copy of the paper for which Sterne wrote throughout the length of one year, from April 1741 until the succeeding March.² Here begins Laurence Sterne as author and humorist. Here is the source among sources of *Tristram Shandy* and indeed the opening and cause of Sterne's literary career. Without this paper it is possible *Tristram Shandy* would never have been written. At what moment Sterne actually began to write for it I cannot say, but he most likely undertook to cry up the Whigs and Walpole therein immediately following his marriage.

Although I have made a search for the *York Gazetteer* in various great libraries of England and have endeavoured by advertisement to discover a stray issue, I have met with no success. Yet it is to be hoped that further numbers of the paper will come to light, in order that all the writings of Sterne at this period may be collected.

If, following his election, Lord Morpeth had not died, there would remain only a dull story of Sterne and the *York Gazetteer*. Sterne would have limited himself to boosting the Whig candidates in the city election with which, since he was not a freeman and could have no vote,³

¹ Besides the copy at the York Minster Library another, dated 26 Mar. 1745, is in the possession of Councillor Thomas Gray, of Acomb, York. Davies [op. cit., p. 314] reported to have seen a number dated 26 Nov. 1745.

² Cf. p. 113.

³ Persons within the liberty of St. Peter's were without the jurisdic-

he was not especially concerned. The *Gazetteer* would have died eventually of sheer inertia and its correspondent would have found himself poor once again. But Morpeth's death and the quick appearance of two rival candidates for Parliament at so critical a time saved the life of the paper, and with it the literary prospects of Sterne. Immediately the *Gazetteer* found a flaming purpose, the encouragement of the Whig party and the necessity of attracting the electors to its cause. Sterne was become the official spokesman of the party, he was supporting that very candidate for whom his uncle had formerly battled and may have thought that of the two he had the more difficult task. Turner was not a candidate who could win races by himself. Even in 1734 the Tories had been so subtle as to perceive how arduous was the attempt to champion the lethargic Turner and had written squibs about it. One of these was confident of failure.

C——m T——r will always a Wronghead be found,
 Tho' his wit cost, at least, *Ten thousand good Pound*;
 But he that does judge him a Candidate fit,
 Will be, like himself, most damnably bit.¹

The truth of this prophecy, not too evident in 1734, was certainly obvious enough in 1741, for if it was not well-known how unwilling Turner was to break away from Kirkleatham and his grief to soil himself again in political

tion of the city and could not vote for a city member. Sterne's name does not appear in *The Poll for Members in Parliament for the city of York. Begun the 13th of May, 1741*, York: Printed by John Jackson in *GRAPE-LANE*: Where may be had a Weekly *News-paper*, called **THE YORK GAZETTEER**. York Minster Library, Hailstone, C. 8.; Bodleian Library, G. A. Yorks, 4^o 35.

¹ Thomas Lashley, *Lashley's York Miscellany*, York 1734, p. 12. York Public Library, Y. 329.

strife, his advertisement which he published in the *Courant* on 8 September set beyond question his reluctance to join the Whigs. He had for some time past, he admitted, flattered himself with the agreeable prospect of spending the remainder of his days upon his estate, after having given thirty years to the service of his country; but, since the Whigs had clamorously urged him to become a candidate, he accepted the nomination.¹ Cold were these words that Sterne must interpret to his fellows as words of burning enthusiasm. Difficult was the task, with such an unpropitious beginning, of bringing this candidate into Parliament in the face of the riotous assurance of George Fox and his followers. Yet Sterne undertook to do it. He wrote his articles for the *Gazetteer* the while he paid his mother a flying visit at Liverpool,² and even carried the war into the columns of the *Courant* itself. Here then the story of his politics discloses itself. The *York Courant*, the almost complete file of which is preserved at the office of the *Yorkshire Herald* at York, is especially full of Sterne's activities at this time, and it is here that one reads of his burlesque politics, his jibes and counter-strokes, his lies and denials, the whole followed by a recantation as abrupt as that of Geoffrey Chaucer. Throughout one watches him at work full nineteen years before his great novel brought him into fame. He is agile and Rabelaisian, and produces as good a cock-and-bull story as his neighbour.

The same morning on which Turner published his laconic acceptance there appeared in the *Courant* from a Tory that signed himself 'J. S.', of Leeds, a letter which

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 830, Tuesday, 8 Sept. 1741 [p. 3].

² *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 96.

showed plainly that Sterne had been cunningly busy during the one week that had elapsed since the meeting of the Whigs at the George Inn on 29 August. The writer angrily complained that he was come to erase '*a false aspersion cast on One of the Candidates, and industriously propagated in printed Hand-Bills*', to the effect that Fox was an Irishman. Quite on the contrary, he declared, Fox was an Englishman, having been born and bred in London, and had no further claim to be called an Irishman than that he had inherited the estates of Lord Lanesborough. Fox had hitherto represented an English borough, and by marriage had become a loyal Yorkshireman.¹ The letter was tart. Clearly enough the Tories were disturbed by the handbills and wished to suppress the unpleasant rumour. Who spread that rumour, who wrote the handbills, remain questions unfathomable, although Sterne appears to have been the most likely person to concoct the mischief. Since he never quite forgot this allegation and often delighted to brandish it like a sword of fire against this very 'J. S.', it would seem he was the author. At a loss how to praise Cholmley Turner, whom he possibly could not comprehend, he had let fly his first shaft against the Tory candidate, struck home, and waited to enjoy the discomfort of his adversaries.

Throughout the next three weeks, now that the contest between Sterne and 'J. S.' had actually begun, Cæsar Ward found his office besieged with certain villainous letters from a Whig who, at least upon one occasion, had adopted the name of a resident of York, in signing himself

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 830, Tuesday, 8 Sept. 1741 [p. 3]. J. S. to the Printer Leeds, 5 Sept. 1741.

'J. Wainman'.¹ So full of abuse and scurrility were these letters that Ward was at length obliged to make a public protest against their author, which he did on 29 September. His words were obscure and covered the identity of the culprit, who was well enough known to him.

*When the Writer of a Letter sent Yesterday to the Printing Office, reflecting upon a worthy Clergyman in this County, and sign'd J. Wainman, thinks fit to subscribe his own Name, it will be soon enough to insert it; in the mean Time it may be proper to inform the Vicar, who penn'd it, that the Printer of this Paper is not to be impos'd upon by counterfeited Letters from Guisbrough, nor fictitious Names in York.*²

Apparently the advertisement had no bearing upon the election and seemed no more than some ecclesiastical quarrel, until later events brought it into glaring prominence, and linked with it the name of Laurence Sterne. Ward was thoroughly convinced that he had divined the true author, since none but Sterne would write from Guisborough, which was the posting town not only for Kirkleatham, where Turner dwelt, but as well for Skelton Castle, where Sterne might be enjoying the company of another Whig, John Hall-Stevenson. Yet Ward, however deep his suspicions, had the grace to keep his peace, saying no word more. At present the notice aroused no interest, and passed away as a mere incident of the morning.

¹ A John Wainman, having a freehold at Bramley and being a resident of Pudsey, voted for Turner in the election of 1742 (*Poll for the County of York*, York: Printed by John Jackson in *Grape-Lane*: Where may be had a Weekly News-Paper, call'd the YORK GAZETTEER [1742], p. 248). A Joseph Wainman was licensed to marry Elizabeth Green in York Minster, 9 Feb. 1739-40. The latter is described as 'of y^e city of York'. *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1875, iii, p. 90.

² *York Courant*, Numb. 833, Tuesday, 29 Sept. 1741 [p. 3].

With 'J. Wainman' and his treacherous letters out of the way, Cæsar Ward now opened on behalf of Fox an earnest campaign, which should offset the effect of Sterne's articles in the *York Gazetteer*. He crowed over his candidate and told how on 4 October Mr. Fox had come 'to this City, after a Progress through the East and some Part of the North Ridings (Mr. Fox judiciously avoided the Whiggish purlieus of Guisborough, *ed.*). He was received in every Town he came to, particularly Scarborough and Beverley, with great Demonstrations of Joy, and Assurances of the Freeholders Votes and Interest. This Extraordinary Success', wrote Cæsar Ward with vast complacence, 'puts it out of Dispute, but that Mr Fox will be elected by a great Majority.'¹ Reassurance shone from the faces of Tories. Fox had proved himself no Irishman and Cæsar Ward had foretold the result of the election. Confident then that the Whigs were fighting a losing battle, and that a little broad-minded charity towards them would do him no hurt, he prefaced a fortnight later a long article by 'J. S.' with these generous remarks:

*The Printer of the YORK COURANT being willing to preserve that Impartiality, he has constantly observ'd, of inserting any Advertisements relating to the present contested Election, come it from what Quarter it will, provided it is wrote with Decency and good Manners, thinks it necessary to inform the Gentleman whose Conduct is concerned in the following Letter (or his Friends) that if any Answer be sent before Friday next, it shall be inserted next Week; otherwise they must not take it amiss if it is delayed 'till the Week after.'*²

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 834, Tuesday, 6 Oct. 1741 [p. 3].

² *Id.*, Numb. 836, Tuesday, 20 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

In less rhetoric the notice invited Sterne to write a reply which should forthwith be printed in the *Courant*, always provided Mr. Sterne could write such 'with Decency and good Manners'.

The letter from 'J. S.', which Ward prefaced with his offer of conciliation, reviewed the situation from the Tory camp. It censured Turner for not remaining to his decision of withdrawal and professed that, save for a few incendiaries, the county had rejoiced to learn of his retirement. The death of Lord Morpeth had unfortunately called him forth again, this time supported by the necessitous inclination of his party, to disturb the peace of the election and to evoke his past conduct which had been better left in its obscurity. 'J. S.' questioned Turner's announcement that he had spent over thirty years in public life, charged him with age and ill-health, and even intimated that his party had harnessed him like an old horse to carry them along their road, until they should at the last moment turn him out and hasten in another. At the close of this discourteous letter he presented nine queries, all of which condemned Turner and dared the Whigs to answer them.

In taking up this challenge and in accepting Ward's invitation to publish his reply in the *Courant*, Sterne was to do his best for Cholmley Turner. He was to turn upon his opponent with a fresh set of queries and attack him as well on personal grounds, for he was at present perfectly assured of the identity of 'J. S.', of Leeds.

The Rev. Mr. James Scott was Vicar of Bardsey, a parish lying some eight miles to the north of Leeds. He had been born in the year 1700 at Wakefield and had

matriculated at University College, Oxford, in 1717.¹ After proceeding to the degree of Master of Arts in 1728, he served as curate of the Chapel of the Holy and Undivided Trinity at Leeds² and, four years later, was presented to the living of Bardsey by the Tory peer, John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich,³ who at that time was a trustee of the estate of Robert, Lord Bingley.⁴ Here in Bardsey, the village which gave birth to William Congreve, Scott had lived with Tory sentiments and with obscurity. He had been a supporter of Sir Miles Stapylton in the election of 1734,⁵ and had greeted Dr. John Burton's efforts to establish a county hospital at York with a yearly subscription,⁶ but aside from these minor activities he could have been to York society, and to Sterne in particular, no more than a mere Tory parson of a distant village about whom none had much to say. He had married a granddaughter of a Dean of York,⁷ and was to reap his greatest fame from his son, James Scott, the Rector of Simonburn, who, under the name of Anti-Sejanus, attacked the Grenville Ministry in 1765.⁸ After the contested election of 1741 he dropped again into silence,

¹ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886*, Oxford 1888, iv, p. 1264, v.s. Scott.

² Diocesan Registry, York: *Institutions of the Diocese of York 1724-1733*, p. 100; id., 1733-44, p. 43.

³ Id., 1724-1733, p. 290. Dated 7 July 1732.

⁴ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Probate Registry, Somerset House, London: Isham 86.

⁵ Thomas Lashley, op. cit., p. 78.

⁶ *An Account of the Publick Hospital . . . in the County of York*, York 1743, p. 37. York Minster Library, Hailstone, B. 8.

⁷ *Notes and Queries*, Feb. 1857, 2nd Series, iii, p. 136.

⁸ James Scott, of Simonburn, *Sermons*, London 1816, *A Sketch of the Life of the Author*, by S. Clapham, pp. iii-vii.

nothing being heard of him until he lost his suit against the trustees of the vicarage of Leeds on account of a double election to hold that living in 1746.¹ For nearly half a century he continued in his pastoral work about Leeds, 'popular as a preacher',² and concealing 'under the exterior of a too severe and rigid virtue the most endearing sweetness and gentleness of manners', and died 10 February 1782.³ He never revealed the secret whether or not he was the 'J. S.' who long ago had provoked Laurence Sterne. He must have died, amused with this fellow who had jumped so hastily to the conclusion that he and 'J. S.' were one and the same person.

A week after Scott, or 'J. S.', had published his letter in the *Courant* appeared a brave reply from the pen of Sterne.⁴ It was written in accordance with Ward's rules of decency and good manners, and indeed was most surprisingly polite, for Ward had combed it of all personal invective. Several weeks later Ward had occasion to describe how he had corrected the letter 'in which there were some Passages I made Objections to, whereupon the Messenger went away, and return'd again with those obnoxious Passages expunged, and I agreed to insert it in the next Paper: But the same Evening the abovementioned Mr Sterne came to me, and said, *He had made some Mistakes in*

¹ James Scott, *A Narrative with Reflections on the Management of the late Contest for the Vicarage of Leedes*, 2nd ed., Leedes, Wakefield, and York 1750-1. Suit tried in Chancery before Lord-Chancellor Hardwicke, 21 Feb. 1749-50. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 157, f. 254.

² James Scott, of Simonburn, op. cit., p. x.

³ *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1782, vol. lii, p. 95. Richard V. Taylor (*The Biographia Leodiensis*, London 1865, pp. 145-6 n.) gives 11 Feb. 1782.

⁴ *York Courant*, Numb. 837, Tuesday, 27 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

the Letter which He had sent that Evening, and particularly by inserting the word Not superfluously; whereupon I gave him his Letter, and he made some few Alterations in it'.¹ Sterne, of course, made no manner of objection to Ward's cutting down of the article. He may have recalled old Burton's advice, *obsequio vinces*, for he was all meekness, having already devised in his head a plan by which he could avoid Ward's censorship and uncover the printer's pretence of fair play. He would straightway print the letter himself. To-day in the Minster Library there is preserved an octavo pamphlet of eight pages, of which the author is unrecorded. It bears the title *Query upon Query; Being an Answer to J. S.'s Letter Printed in the York Courant, York: Printed in the Year 1741*.² This precious little brochure is Sterne's first book. The text of the letter which follows I have taken from this version, since it is complete.

*To J. S. at Leeds.*³

SIR,

There will need little Apology for a Repulse to the rude Attack made upon the Character and Conduct of one of our worthy Candidates, in a Letter which you have signed *J. S.* and inserted in the *York Courant*.⁴

I would not doubt but the same Candour and Goodness of Disposition which *before* tempted you to take Pen in Hand, in Opposition to any Talent you had for such a Work, to rescue Mr. *Fox* from a *false Aspersion*

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 843, Tuesday, 8 Dec. 1741 [p. 4].

² Hailstone Collection, B. 8.

³ First published in *York Courant*, Numb. 837, Tuesday, 27 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

⁴ *Id.*, Numb. 836, Tuesday 20 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

(as you call'd it)¹ will in so tender a Case as this, come in again to your Succour, and not only dispose You to bear a Reply, but even wish for one, however it may expose you to Ridicule or Contempt. And since I have mention'd that *first* Letter of yours, it will not detain me long in my Way, to leave this Piece of general Criticism upon it; 'That out of all the Productions of the Moderns (for one cannot in Conscience suspect the Ancients) of what Country, Climate or Complexion soever, I Challenge you to produce any one Writing, where so long a Chain of undesigned Blunders are link'd together in so narrow a Compass.'² But, perhaps, this *second* Letter may abundantly retrieve the Honour lost by the *first*. Let us examine.—³

And now, Sir, to avoid the Trouble of transcribing you, you must be content to let me reduce almost the first Column of your Letter into very little Compass; which, you'll see, may very easily be done⁴ without any way endangering one jot of the Meaning. Upon casting up the Contents of the three first Paragraphs, The *Sense Total* amounts just to this single Proposition. 'That last *April* Mr. *Turner* (as appears by Letter)⁵ had

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 830, Tuesday 8 Sept. 1741 [p. 3]; cf. p. 41.

² 'The particulars upon which this general Criticism is grounded, were printed in a Letter inserted in the *York Gazetteer*, Sept. the 29th'—Sterne. The humorist alludes probably to his own answer to 'J. S.' which appeared in the lost issue of his paper for that date.

³ Ward excluded 'And since I have mention'd . . . Let us examine. —'

⁴ For Ward Sterne wrote, 'into a very little Room, which may be easily done.'

⁵ Turner's letter of resignation of the preceding April in *York Courant*, Numb. 810, Tuesday 21 Apr. 1741 [p. 3]; p. 24. 'J. S.' had

QUERY upon *QUERY*;

BEING AN

Answer to J. S's

LETTER

Printed in the *York-Courant* October 20, relating to the present contested Election.

Μεγά Βιβλίον, Μεγά Κακόν

Y O R K :
Printed in the Year 1741.

resigned all Thoughts of acting in a publick Station; But, that at the Solicitations of his Friends, upon Lord *Morpeth's* Death, He had alter'd his Intentions; which if He had not done, The Country had been at Peace, and there had been no contested Election. A most admirable and important Conclusion ! You have been pleased, Sir, to inform us *twice* in your Letter, That before any Offer was made to Mr. *Turner*, Every Person of Figure had given an absolute Refusal,¹ (which by the way is an errant Falsity)² And if He had likewise Refused——what then? why then Every Body had refused; and unless *Two* Candidates had offer'd themselves, There could have been no such Thing as a contested Election. I readily own that had a Discovery of so profound a Nature happen'd to be made in a neighbouring Island, it seems so curiously adapted to the Taste and Genius of that Nation, That past doubt it would have been

written (*id.*, Numb. 836, Tuesday, 20 Oct. [p. 1], ' I dare say that every Gentleman, Clergyman, and Freeholder, except some few Incendiaries, who have been always watchful to enflame and embroil us, were very well pleased with this Letter. They considered the Author of it as a Gentleman grown infirm; and were ready to impute the little Attendance he gave to the Duty of his Station to an Inability of Body more than Mind.'

¹ ' Yet if Mr. *Turner* had kept his word,' wrote ' J. S.', ' and not suffered himself to have been drag'd from his beloved Retirement, the County might still have been at Peace. Add to this, that he could not but know, what every Body else does, that the Ministerial Party would never have made him the Offer, if they could have met with any other Gentleman to accept of it. Where then can be the Wisdom of declaring himself a Candidate at this Time, and thereby exposing all his Votes in Parliament to be scann'd and censur'd, when they might have been for ever buried in Obscurity? '

² Ward omitted this parenthesis. It is sheer bravado on Sterne's part, since Wilkinson wrote, ' no Gentleman there caring to enter the List for Himself, we all unanimously agreed to call forth Mr *Turner*.' Cf. p. 31.

thought of marvelous Benefit to the Public, and at once have been a ready Cut both to your Reputation and Fortune; But Alas! Sir, it is unluckily miscalculated for an *English* Meridian,¹ and falls so many Degrees either *above* or *below* our Researches, That 'tis quite lost upon us.

But the worst part of the Story is yet untold, which is this, 'That if Mr. *Turner* had not declared himself a Candidate at this Time, His Actions would not *now* have been scan'd over and censur'd: at this Juncture He might have escaped the merciless Fury of *J. S's* Pen.

Indeed Mr. *J. S.* I know not how high your Vanity may rate a Deliverance of this Nature, but I have been at some Pains in making a Calculation of the *real* Damage which Mr. *Turner* may be supposed to have sustain'd by your Letter, and upon the nicest Estimate it appears, That the Difference between your Censure and Applause, with regard to His Character, is so little, That² *even so small* a Thing as your own HUMILITY³ will be able to turn the Ballance either Way.

Your fourth Paragraph, which, to do it Justice is the most elaborate of them all, surprizes the Publick with a fresh set of Discoverys;—You Inform us, That if Mr. *Turner* gave no Votes contrary to the public welfare, that then his Time has been spent in the Service of his Country; But if on the Contrary, He acted in opposition to the general Sense of the Nation, that then he

¹ Again the 'false Aspersion'.

² Sterne had written for Ward, 'the different Effects of your Censure or Applause, upon Mr. *Turner's* Character, are so undistinguishable, that.'

³ A virtue theoretically possessed by the Rev. Mr. Scott.

could not be said to have discharged his Trust. I fancy the meaning of this Mysterious Assertion, converted into plain English, amounts to no more than this, '*That if Mr. Turner acted well, He acted Well; & vice versa, If He acted wrong, He certainly acted wrong.*'¹ This Specimen of your Casuistry and the Paradox subjoin'd 'That Age and consequently a Knowledge in Parliamentary Affairs is a Disqualification for a British Member, As the *first* is supported with great Logic, I know not well how to venture a Reply, and as the *second* is grounded upon *false Suggestions*, I think it does not *deserve* one.'²

The Paragraph preceeding your Queries is so full of secret History,³ a kind of Learning in which *Honest Men*

¹ A nice reduction to absurdity. 'J. S.' had maintained that if Turner had 'given no Votes contrary to the public Welfare, then these Years may be truly said to have been *spent in the Service of his Country*', but that if he had 'several Times Voted in Matters of great Moment directly opposite to the general Sense of the Nation', he displayed want of judgment.

² Sterne is maliciously unfair. 'J. S.' contended, 'If he [Turner] has been many Times absent on the most important Occasions, when his Attendance in Parliament, as Representative of the largest County in *England*, was absolutely necessary, then I think it can never be said of such a Member, that he *faithfully persevered in the great Trust reposed in him*. If his Age or ill State of Health be alledged as an Excuse for his Non-Attendance, this must render him incapable of doing his Duty; an Incapacity which must certainly increase with his Years; for no one can judge a Man near 60 stronger and abler than he was seven Years ago.' This argument is neither casuistry nor paradox. Sterne ignores Turner's absences from the House of Commons as well as his ill health, and by emphasizing his age, thus adroitly infers his increased political experience. The twist is clever.

³ The charges of 'J. S.' were three; first, that the Whigs, not the Tories, had scattered the rumour that on the eve of the election they would drop Turner for another candidate; second, that his nomination was a last resort; third, that his party would forsake him as they tried

are seldom well versed, and rarely ever lay much Stress upon, That till you are pleased to republish it with proper Vouchers for every Fact you assert, with a Key added to explain the whole, I cannot well tell what to say to it: In the mean time permit me to rest here a moment, whilst I make a short Reflection, the Application of which I leave to your own Heart;¹ 'That the throwing out of random Accusations upon a whole Body of Men, without the least Proof, the least shadow of Evidence, is a Piece of injustice and Barbarity ill agreeing with that Spirit of Meekness and Charity which should be the Characteristick of a *Teacher of Truth*.²

I have now, Sir, waded through your Letter, and with some Difficulty am at last arrived at your *Queries*, and Indeed I wish I could either compliment You or Myself with saying that I find any Thing in them to justify my Labour; however I wou'd have answer'd them one by one, but that the following Set of new *Queries* will make it quite needless;³ a plain and honest Answer to each of which will naturally direct you to the true Solution of your own.

Query, 1. Whether a *wilful and premeditated* Desertion of the House (as in the Memorable Instance of the SECESSION last Parliament) can be call'd a Discharge of publick Trust? And whether it is not a far greater

to do in 1734, when they desired to send up Sir Rowland Winn in his place.

¹ Originally, 'a Reflection, which is this, That the throwing.'

² i.e. a clergyman of the Church of England.

³ Ward's version: 'Myself with acknowledging, that I have found any Thing in them to justify my Labour. I fancy the following Set of new *Queries* will save me the Trouble of answering yours one by one.'

Objection than any *Involuntary* Absence by *accidental* ill Health? ¹

Query, 2. Whether the CONVENTION which the Querist is so full of, is any Thing else in *his* Mouth (whatever it is in Others) but a Cant Word adopted without Meaning and Eccho'd out amongst the People to inflame and abuse them? ²

Query, 3. If the Ministry had taken no Steps towards a Peace, and had proceeded to the War with Spain ³ before they had ever attempted to Treat, Whether their Enemys could have wish'd for a more popular Cry against them?

Query, 4. Whether it is not both the Study and Interest of the Minority, and the Instruments which they employ, to blacken the present Administration at

¹ Cholmley Turner's son, Marwood William, had died 10 Oct. 1739, J. W. Ord, *The History of Cleveland*, London 1846, p. 375. Turner, absent from Parliament in December of that year, was back again in March 1740-1; cf. *Journals of the House of Commons*, xxiii, p. 672.

² In an effort to avoid a war with Spain over her supposed right of searching ships in American waters, Walpole had agreed to a settlement, called the Convention, which Spain at length signed, 14 Jan. 1738-9. By this agreement Spain was to indemnify England by a payment of £140,000. The Opposition, terming the Convention 'national ignominy', because it preferred to destroy Walpole to maintaining the peace, attacked the measure in March of that year. Walpole thereupon offered his resignation and was refused. In indignation, on 9 March, the Opposition, headed by Pulteney and Wyndham and numbering George Fox, who was a member for Hindon, seceded from the House. This secession not only proved a fiasco but strengthened Robert Walpole. Fox had voted against the Convention and Turner had supported it. cf. *An Exact List of All those who voted for and against the late Convention*, London 1739, British Museum, 104. K. 30.

³ Because Spain did not renounce her right of search, Walpole was forced into war, 23 Oct. 1739. The next month saw the Secessionists back in their seats.

all hazards, both *for doing* and *not doing* the same Thing?¹

Query, 5. Whether Mr. *Turner's* Regard and Zeal for the *Sailors* was ever made a Query of before?²

Query, 6. If the Triennial Bill had stood its Ground when Mr. *Turner* voted for the Repeal of it, Whether the *Triennial Commotions* consequent upon it, would not have favour'd the Designs of the Enemies to the *Hanover* Succession, and thereby have given new Hopes and Vigour to the Spirit of *Jacobitism*?³

¹ A sound conclusion, both human and Whiggish. Walpole had already observed that 'the Opposition is entirely owing to Party Prejudice, or to Malice and Resentment', and that this very Opposition seemed to think the Administration 'the Author of all their Misdeeds . . . they not only condemn but oppose all its Measures'. Richard Chandler, *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, London 1742, xi, pp. 234-5.

² 'J. S.' had asked whether or not Turner was present when the Sailors Bill was introduced, 'the Design of which was to make Gally-Slaves, or what is as bad, of those brave People, and give a Commission to enter, or break open the Houses of any Persons upon a bare Pretence that a Sailor lived there.' With the war against Spain declared England found her ships unmanned. In order to equip a sufficient fleet Walpole had introduced a Bill before the House of Commons, 5 Feb. 1740-1, in favour of establishing a general register of all sailors. The Opposition screamed the plan was French, although it had clamoured for the war. Upon a second reading the Bill was rejected, and as a result the war dragged on miserably. Cf. Chandler, *op. cit.*, xi, pp. 265-80, 297.

³ Did not Turner vote for the 'Repeal of the *Triennial Bill*, and thereby was an Instrument of entailing long Parliaments upon the Nation?'—'J. S.' In 1694 the Whigs had successfully advocated a proposal for the limitation of Parliaments to a period of three years; yet, in 1716, when the Triennial Act was attacked by the Tories, who under Oxford had felt the restraint upon their power such a law maintained, the Bill was discussed and repealed. It had served to increase bribery and excitement at times of election, and permitted no consistent foreign policy (cf. *The Political History of England*, IX: I. S. Leadam, *England 1702-1760*, London 1909, pp. 267-8). Cholmley Turner, heedless of the opinion of the Knights of the Shire and fearful

Query, 7. Whether Numbers of the *Torys* did not Vote against the Repeal of that Bill upon that very View?

Query, 8. Whether most, if not all the Gentlemen in the Opposition, however changed, did not actually Vote for the Repeal of it?¹

Query, 9.² Whether J. S. is consistent with himself, *first* in lamenting the *Hurricane* upon a Septennial Election, and then complaining of Mr. Turner for not wishing these Contests twice as often?³

Query, 10. Whether Mr. *Turner* in voting against the Repeal of the Septennial Bill, did any Thing more than act Consistently with Himself?⁴

lest the Jacobites be encouraged by frequent election disturbances, had voted for its repeal. Cf. *An exact and correct List of the Members of the House of Commons who voted for and against the Bill for repealing the Triennial Act*, 24 April 1716, p. 7. British Museum, 1865. c. 16 (24).

¹ The Bill for the repeal of the Triennial Act passed in the House of Commons in the affirmative by 264 votes against 121 (Chandler, op. cit., vi, p. 105). Sterne's note to this query was, '*In Particular, My Lord Carlisle, Mr. Aislabie, Mr. Wortley and Mr. Pultney voted for the Repeal of the Triennial Bill.*'

² Printed only in the pamphlet *Query upon Query*.

³ 'J. S.' had remarked, 'They (the Freeholders) were but just relieved from the Hurricane which the former Election, and the Petition at the Tail of it, had occasioned in the County; and every Man was about to look civil again at his Neighbour.'

At the repeal of the Triennial Act in 1716 a Bill lengthening the duration of Parliament to a period of seven years was passed and became the Septennial Act. The purpose of this law was to guard against a Jacobite invasion and to give Walpole longer control over the House. Of this Act Lecky says (*History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1892, ii, p. 63), 'Its beneficial effect in repressing disorder and immorality, in giving a new stability to English policy, a new strength to the dynasty, and a new authority to the House of Commons, can never be forgotten. It was accompanied, however, by no measure of parliamentary reform, and it had the inevitable effect of greatly increasing corruption both at elections and in the House.'

⁴ Had not Turner voted 'against a *Repeal* of the *Septennial Act*,

Query, 11. Whether the Querist by a *numerous* standing Army, does not intend such an Army as is necessary to check the Fury of the People spirited up to any Enterprize by Party-Artifices and false Clamours? ¹

Query, 12. Whether Mr. *Turner* was ever for any Vote of Credit, which was not absolutely necessary for the Safety and Honour of his Country?

Query, 13. Whether the leading Men of that Party, which brought in the last *Place-Bill*, secretly wished it any Success? Or whether They did not bring it in on purpose to have it thrown out, to reinforce their defeated Cause with a fresh Topic for Declamation at the approaching general Election? ²

when it was strenuously urged in the House; and thereby confirm'd his former Vote? '—' J. S.' On 13 Mar. 1733-4 the Septennial Act was again discussed. Walpole contended that in periods of three years the Commons could not gain sufficient power to withstand the King and the House of Lords. Wyndham replied that Walpole regarded long Parliaments as an opportunity for bribery and corruption. Walpole's was the victory; cf. Justin McCarthy, *A History of the Four Georges*, London 1890, i, pp. 191-2; ii, 13-25.

¹ In answering the query of ' J. S.', Sterne was mindful of the recent Porteous riot at Edinburgh and other popular disturbances. The Bill for increasing the standing army had been promoted by Walpole and was passed, 26 Jan. 1731-2. In support of the Bill Lord Hervey had urged its necessity for ' the Quiet and Prosperity of this Nation, and for the Preservation of the Protestant Succession in his Majesty's most illustrious family ' (Chandler, *op. cit.*, vii, p. 104.). The panic caused by the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 justified Walpole's provision and, as well, Sterne's query.

² In 1706 a Bill was passed excluding from the House of Commons all members who accepted office under the Crown. This effort to stem corruption was not enforced by Walpole, who fed places to members in order to ensure for himself that necessity of his political existence, a majority in the House of Commons. The Place Bill, which proposed to limit these offices, the Opposition repeatedly presented without success. In the debate, 29 Jan. 1739-40, to which Sterne refers, Walpole evaded the accusations of his enemies and caused the failure of the bill; cf. Chandler, *op. cit.*, xi, pp. 202-46.

Query, 14. Whether a great Part of the Minority did not wish in their Hearts for the very Places against which they affected to Vote?

Query, 15. Whether Mr. *Fox*'s Tenants upon his *fine* Estate in Ireland will not be enabled to make him both greater and more Punctual Remittances on Condition that they can be permitted to sell their Wool to *France*?
If so,

Query, 16. Whether Mr. *Fox* is by any Means a proper Person to be employ'd in rooting that *Canker* out of our Woollen Manufacture?¹

Query, 17.² Whether Mr. *Fox* did not actually Vote in Favour of the Irish Manufacture, in the Bill for importing Irish Yarn into ENGLAND, to the Ruin of the Combers, Spinners, &c. of this County?³

Query, 18. Whether the setting up of a FOREIGNER to

¹ Did Turner vote 'against the *Exportation of English or Irish Wooll to France*; the very Bane and Canker of our Woollen Manufacture?'—'J. S.' The same Tory later wrote (*York Courant*, Numb. 847, Tuesday 5 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 1]), 'Mr Fox was one of the Members appointed, together with Alderman Vere of Norwich, for bringing in a Bill last Parliament, to prevent the pernicious Practice of running Wool to France: That it did not succeed was owing to the Votes of those, who have been the Dupes of France these twenty Years.'

² This and the following query printed only in Sterne's pamphlet, *Query upon Query*.

³ This contemptible opinion Sterne shared with many of the Whigs. Fearful lest Ireland raise herself out of misery by the wool trade and undersell the English manufacturers, the Government, in 1699, had quashed her efforts by forbidding her to export her wool to any other country whatever. The destruction of the trade which had employed about 42,000 people brought great misery to the country, decayed the revenues, and was the cause of the famine of 1740-1 (cf. W. E. H. Lecky, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1892, i, pp. 175-87). One recalls Swift's dark lamentations over the poverty in Ireland. The irony of the situation was the simultaneous decay of the English industry.

represent this large and rich County is not a plain Proof that the PARTY was reduc'd to the last Necessity?¹

Query, lastly, Whether *J. S.* whoever he is, does not deserve to be call'd to an immediate Account for that blind and extravagant Stroke of Insolence in daring to call every Gentleman an Incendiary who wish'd for an Opposition, which the Better Half of the County did, at the last general Election?²

I am, Sir,

Yours.

York, Oct. 22.

1741.

That Dr. Sterne looked with some displeasure upon this ambitious letter, which his nephew had written, is to be surmised from the fact that Sterne was obliged to write a further reply to the same charges of 'J. S.'. The Doctor was not the man to countenance any answer but one that denounced and did slaughter by dint of facts and reason, and could not, from this letter, have considered his nephew as potent a political writer as that nephew imagined himself to be. Apart from one or two undeniable arguments which Sterne had used he must have observed the nebulous nature of the body of the letter, for indeed it was no

¹ When the Tories had considered Fox as a candidate in 1734, the Whigs had expressed the same sentiment (Thomas Lashley, *op. cit.*, p. 10):

'Fox likewise stood off, but they should not endanger, So hopeful a Cause on th' account of a Stranger.'

² 'J. S.' had remarked that all electors in Yorkshire 'except some few Incendiaries' were pleased to send Morpeth to Parliament. Sterne appears to be piqued at this slur upon his loyalty to Walpole. Lord Morpeth would doubtless have followed his father, who had allied himself with Pulteney and Wyndham.

more than an exhibition of feats of casuistry and of argumentative fencing. Here Sterne had perhaps embarrassed his adversary with a stroke of wit, and there he had quite laid him on the ground with a thrust of sophistry, but throughout the body of the letter he had so glibly mocked 'J. S.' and criticized his manners that the set of earnest queries he attached to it are still surprising to come upon. It was in these questions that he displayed his strength. It was in these questions alone lay the justification of printing the letter as a pamphlet, since in 1741 there could be only a few who relished the malice of his words and who were not more intent upon an able defence of Cholmley Turner. Sterne had offered nineteen queries in opposition to the nine of 'J. S.', and succeeded brilliantly not only in demolishing the Tory's doubts but in prohibiting his invention of an additional group. He was well trained for his task, for his use of some of Walpole's own ideas reveal how carefully he had followed the reasoning and admirable common-sense of that great statesman. To insure him a complete victory his only need was this very attention to Walpole. Consistency could always overthrow the Tories, who had no other purpose than obstruction. They could not at all deny the absurdity of their intentions in decrying the Convention and, when once war was declared, in railing against the Ministry for attempting to equip the fleet. No more could they excuse the Secession or their belief that a large standing army would entail great expense upon the people. Likewise, at least for the Tories of Yorkshire, it was impossible for them to realize in a matter, then most native and dear to the county, how difficult it would be for George Fox to aid in the restoration of an industry that

was on the point of destruction. In dwelling upon Fox's ability to encourage the wool trade, Sterne had touched the heart of political issues in Yorkshire.

The county of York had formerly been noted for its woollen manufacture. The towns of Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, and Wakefield had made the carding and spinning of wool their chief occupation but, owing to the monopoly in the trade gained by Norfolk, had lost their pre-eminence. In the second and third quarters of the century, however, this monopoly had decreased to such an extent that the Yorkshire weavers, all of whom worked skilfully by hand, began to regain their ascendance, although for a certain reason that ascendance was slow and precarious.¹ The Irish manufacturers, who in the reign of King William had been thought suppressed, were not content to obey the law, and had found a ready market in France, where they could sell their wool at a price seemingly lower than that demanded by England.² The result of this running of wool to France was the serious decay of the industry in England. During the previous twenty-four years the price of a wool-pack had fallen from £10 to £4. Petition after petition to alleviate this distress reached the House. One of these complaints perceived that the secret of the decay lay in the cheap labour of France.

The French (it stated) cannot work up their own Wool into Cloths proper for the foreign Markets, without mixing one

¹ *Victoria History of the Counties of England: Yorkshire*, ed. William Page, London 1912, ii, p. 417 *seq.*

² W. E. H. Lecky, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1892, i, p. 180.

Pack of British or Irish Wool with two of their own; the Petitioners hope, if effectual Methods could be found to prevent the French from having the Wool from Great Britain or Ireland, they would not for the future be able to undersell his Majesty's Subjects in the Foreign Markets.¹

Following a further petition laid before the House of Commons in March 1738-9,² there had come similar lamentations from Leeds and from York.³ In March 1740-1 Cholmley Turner had himself presented a Bill for the regulation of the weavers in the West Riding and, by seeing it carried to the House of Lords and passed by both Houses, had distinguished himself notably in the eyes of the sufferers in Yorkshire.⁴ George Fox, on the other hand, had accomplished nothing in the matter.⁵ Where Turner could have only the interests of the native manufacture at heart, Fox, burdened with those embarrassing Irish estates, might be inclined to consider how far a running of wool to France from Ireland could be of benefit to that country and to himself. To stifle this suspicion he would be obliged to represent the Irish policy in other than its true light, and to do that in the face of well-known facts would be almost superhuman. Ruined as Ireland was, there was little chance that she would consent to the annihilation of her industry. Famine does not provoke compliance. An attempt to discuss the prohibition of wool-running in the Irish Parliament the preceding winter

¹ Richard Chandler, *op. cit.*, xii. pp. 55-6.

² *Id.*, xi, p. 71.

³ *Id.*, xii, p. 63; xiii, pp. 131, 182, 269.

⁴ *Journals of the House of Commons*, xxiii, pp. 672, 679, 688, 691, 694, 702.

⁵ Cf. p. 57, note 1.

had resulted only in anger and eventual silence.¹ It was equally clear, as Sterne showed, that George Fox was not a proper person to be employed in rooting out this canker from the manufacture of woollens.

On 3 November 'J. S.' published in the *Courant*² his third attack upon the Whigs in the form of a brief reply to Sterne's letter. He maintained that England as well as Ireland would gain advantages from a law to prohibit the running of wool to France, reiterated suggestions already before Parliament, and boasted of Fox's ability to root out cankers. From these high politics he next descended to his own defence and assured Sterne 'that J. S. is not a Clergyman, but a Merchant in the Woollen-Trade'. With his own exoneration he closed his letter, as serious and resentful as he had commenced. Then followed the thrust that capsized the dignity and dullness of the combat. Henceforth Sterne and his adversary fought man to man and mayhap Sterne came off the worse. At any rate 'J. S.', or possibly the Rev. Mr. James Scott, had discovered the identity of his querist. He was also acquainted with him and called him 'Lorry',³ the name by which Sterne was known about York. He saw in him that Yorick who 'carried not one ounce of ballast', that Yorick the brisk gale of whose spirits 'ran him foul ten times in a day of

¹ 'Tis well known, that in the very last *Irish* Parliament, a Proposition to prohibit the Wool-smuggling met with so universal a Disrelish, that it occasion'd as great a Clamour as the *Convention*.—? Sterne, cf. pp. 74-5. The Irish proposal was raised in the House and allowed to vanish, cf. *Journals of the Irish House of Commons*, iv, Pt. I, 22 Dec. 1739—13 Feb. 1739-40.

² Numb. 838, Tuesday, 3 Nov. 1741 [p. 3].

³ Wilbur L. Cross, *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, New Haven 1925, i, pp. 62, 160. The first allusion is from *The Whitefoord Papers*, ed. W. A. S. Hewins, Oxford 1898, p. 231.

some body's tackling'.¹ At the end of his letter 'J. S.' slew him with a brace of verses from Pope.

*Let L——y Scribble—what? that Thing of Silk,
L——y that mere white Curd of Ass's Milk?
Satire or Sense, alas! can L——y feel?
Who breaks a Butterfly upon a Wheel? ²*

Incendiary, Thing of Silk, White Curd, Butterfly! Such were the rewards of entering politics to please a Whiggish uncle, such the retort to his brave letter. 'J. S.', refusing to answer Sterne's queries, had wholly passed them over, scorned them utterly, and hoped that the verses would 'stand for a sufficient Answer to all that the Author of the last Queries has writ, or can write'. The tables were completely overturned. Lorry Sterne was struck in his weakest point, his triviality, and saw himself proclaimed to all of Yorkshire a thing of silk. It is not strange, therefore, that he came later in his life to characterize politics as 'dirty work'.³ Yet for the moment he withstood the smart of the lines. At the instigation of Dr. Sterne he prepared another reply to the charges of 'J. S.', and in secret concocted a Shandean morsel he calculated would avenge him.

The following Answer⁴ to J. S's Letter, Address'd to a Freeholder of the County of York, is inserted at the Desire of the Gentlemen in the Interest of Cholmley Turner, Esq.

¹ *Works of Laurence Sterne*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, Book I, chap. ii, p. 27.

² Parody of Pope's lines on Lord Hervey. Elwin and Courthorpe, *Works of Alexander Pope*, London 1881, iii, p. 265, *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, ll. 305-8.

³ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Letters*, p. 6.

⁴ *York Courant*, Numb. 839, Tuesday, 10 Nov. 1741 [p. 1].

SIR,

It is with some Difficulty that I have prevailed with myself to take Pen in Hand to make a *serious* Reply to one of the most scurrilous and uncharitable Letters that ever appear'd in a civiliz'd and Christian Country:

The Foundation of this Outrage (which is a barbarous Insult upon the Distress of a Parent)¹ is a pretended Piece of Inconsistency in Mr. Turner, whose Conduct, in that very Point, hath been just what might be expected from a most tender affectionate Father, and a *real* Patriot,² who, having paid the Debt of Sorrow to his Family, was at last prompted by a Love to his Country in general, and an Affection, in particular, to the County which He had long represented with so much Credit, to lay aside all Considerations of Domestic Troubles, and again offer His Service in Parliament, at a Time, when he thought every Gentleman, who express'd a Satisfaction in his Conduct in the strongest and most honourable Terms, had too large a Stake depending, to mean any Thing or regard any Thing but the Publick——Good.

I appeal to the Heart of every dispassionate Man, whether the most undisguis'd Comment upon this Behaviour does not do Mr. Turner the greatest Honour; One wou'd have hoped that an Action of this Nature might have rested secure from all Attacks; That a *good* Man *would* not have gloss'd away the Merit of it; and

¹ 'J. S.' had attributed Turner's absence from Parliament in 1739-40 to age and ill-health. Turner had been greatly shocked by the death of his son.

² Upon his tomb Turner was described as 'a real British patriot and a truly honest man'. J. W. Ord, *History of Cleveland*, London 1846, p. 376.

that a *bad* Man *durst* not have attempted it; But J. S. has got over one or the other of these Difficulties, and in the Face of the Sun without Blushing has openly triumph'd in the Success of his Atchievement.

But to come closer to Argument and Fact. 'Tis an Assertion the widest from Truth, that Mr. Turner's Resignation the last general Election was a Satisfaction to the Country; the great Complements paid to Mr. Turner at that Time, even by Those who now oppose him in the manner they do, sufficiently shew the contrary; and it is certain, that if He had then offered his Service, the noble Lord who succeeded him wou'd have given him no Opposition. But J. S. says, He shou'd still have persisted in his Resolution to retire. Why so? Or rather why shou'd Mr. Fox have altered His? He had likewise at the last general Election quitted the Service in Parliament, and his continuing in that Resolution would more effectually have preserved the Quiet of the Country, than if Mr. Turner had persisted in His: It must farther be remember'd that Mr. Turner was first declar'd a Candidate,¹ and if occasioning a Contest be such a mighty Crime as J. S. wou'd have it, Mr. Fox indisputably deserves to bear the whole Weight of it. But perhaps J. S. may take it amiss that the Freeholders of this rich and large County have not tamely submitted to whomsoever a *certain* Lord (whose Father has been many Years abroad at Brussels, and is a *profest* Papist) and a few Gentlemen in his Interest have thought fit to impose upon them; I own that a Disappointment in so

¹ 29 Aug. 1741 at York. Fox was nominated two days later. Cf. *York Courant*, Numb. 829, Tuesday, 1 Sept. 1741 [pp. 3, 5].

modest an Expectation might be allow'd a sufficient Cause to exasperate a Don QUIXOT or ORLANDO; But that J. S. should be affected with it; J. S. whose *Meekness* and *Humility* glow so distinguishably in every Line of his Epistles, is a Paradox which I will not attempt to unriddle.

As for Mr. Turner's Conduct in Parliament, He has declared in his Letter¹ that He always acted from a disinterested and unbyass'd Principle;² Does J. S. pretend to say the contrary? Dare he assert that Mr. Turner ever gave any one Vote in order to get a Place, or out of Resentment for having missed of one; and I leave it to every Freeholder to determine, whether the general Welfare of the Nation is not better understood by Mr. Turner than himself.

J. S's Effrontery is very great in the Query, so *happily* express'd by him, whether Mr. Turner attended All or how many Sessions of Parliament except a *Piece* of a Session,³ when it is very well known that no One has in

¹ 'I think myself oblig'd in Vindication of my Character to assert, that in every Publick Emergency I have constantly acted from a disinterested and unbyas'd Principle, and steadily adher'd to that Side of the Question, which upon a View of all Circumstances, appear'd to me the most Conducive to the general Welfare of the Nation.' *The Daily Gazetteer*, Numb. 1850, Wednesday, 14 Oct. 1741 [p. 4]. Turner had voted against Walpole's Excise Bill and with him on the Septennial Act; cf. Chandler, op. cit., viii, Appendices.

² A stout though precarious Whig sentiment. Pelham had remarked in 1739-40, 'I am very far from supposing, that . . . any Minister of the Crown, will ever attempt to give Directions to any Member of this House, with regard to his Behaviour here; and much less can I suppose, that any Gentleman, who has the Honour to be chosen a Member of this House, would submit to follow such Directions, for the sake of any Place or Office he can . . . expect from the Crown.' Chandler, op. cit., xi, p. 218.

³ 'I shall conclude with this, Whether he *attended all* or how many

general attended his Duty in Parliament better than Mr. Turner.

As J. S. could not be ignorant that Mr. Fox was not set up by his Party till all the *Yorkshire* Gentlemen of Figure had refused the Offer, it was strangely impolitic in him to touch upon so sore a Place; when it is the farthest from Truth that Every or Any Gentleman in Mr. Turner's Interest was tried before He was invited to Stand;¹ Mr. Turner and no one else was thought of; He was *unanimously* fix'd upon as the most proper Person: Besides can J. S. suppose that there ever will be wanting Gentlemen in the County to offer their Service to it in Opposition to a *Stranger*? If Mr. Turner had not made so disinterested and honourable a Sacrifice of his private Satisfaction to the Good of his Country, yet the declaring Mr. Fox a Candidate would most infallibly have occasion'd an Opposition.

As for the Army, it has been complain'd of ever since an unhappy *deluded* Queen broke Hers, at the Instigation of a *Treacherous* Ministry, to pave the way for the Pretender, and there is not a Jacobite, or one suspected to be so, who has not every Year talk'd in the Stile of J. S.² which I think is a good Argument for any one's voting for it.

The Affair of the Convention has had the same Fate with J. S. as it has with many others, of being more talked of than understood; however as I hear He in-

Sessions of the last Parliament, except the Piece of a Session, when he was fetch'd up by a Call of the House? — 'J. S.'

¹ Mr. Sterne's statement is 'farthest from the Truth'; cf. p. 31.

² The Tories had occasioned the dismissal of Marlborough and secured the Peace of Utrecht which was signed, 31 Mar. 1713.

tends a second Edition of his Letter with large Amendments, I give Him free Leave when He retouches this Point to embellish it with the following Remark. ' That the Convention (whatever FALSE ASPERSIONS have been cast upon it) did actually save the Freeholders two Shillings in the Pound Land-Tax; for had the War been commenced immediately, the Land-Tax would have been four Shillings in the Pound a Year sooner than it was;¹ which Surplus of two Shillings would have been more than what all the Losses of the Merchants amounted to, for twenty Years together.

If J. S. has any love either for Truth or Honour, He will at the same Time take the Opportunity of begging Mr. Turner's Pardon for his Clownish and most ill-grounded Insult ' of allowing the Gentleman (as he expresses it) to forget Himself, Mr. Turner having really acted publicly in his Country's Service above *Thirty Years*; tho not quite so long in Parliament: In the Year 1706 He was made Deputy Lieutenant of the North

¹ With special reference to the great Whig landowners Walpole reduced the Land Tax, in 1730, to two shillings in the pound. In 1733 he desired to lower it to one shilling, and proposed to supply the deficit such a law would create by levelling duties that should be paid by the retail traders upon consumption. Duties were to be collected not at the ports but upon the inland sale. This Excise Bill was greeted by a riotous outcry, headed by Pulteney. Walpole offered to resign; the Bill failed. The result was a ' triumph of passion and prejudice, excited by the interest of the numerous traders who profited by smuggling, against a scientific adjustment of taxation ' (*Political History of England*, IX: I. S. Leadam, *England 1702-1760*, London 1909, pp. 344-5). Following the declaration of war with Spain in October 1739 the Land Tax was again raised to four shillings in the pound. The Convention, it is quite true, had delayed for a year the necessity of this burden. In July 1758 Sterne was busy in presenting an appeal against this very tax; cf. *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 114.

Riding by Commission from the old Duke of Newcastle, and in the Year 1708 He was at the Expence of equipping Himself and setting out as a Volunteer to oppose the Pretender in Scotland;¹ But perhaps J. S. will not agree that this was acting in his Country's Service; and then, I fear that instead of being a Plea, 'twill be made an Accusation, and expose him to farther Insults.

*I am,
Yours.*

November 3. 1741.

Immediately below this letter appeared the first letter so far signed by Sterne. It was a reply to the verses from Pope and, if it did not fly so high, it plainly foreshadowed the pages of *Tristram Shandy*.

The following Letter is wrote by the same Gentleman that has wrote every Piece that has been inserted in this Paper in Vindication of Cholmley Turner, Esq;

To the PRINTER of the York Courant.

SIR,

As J. S. in your last Courant has shown some Marks of Fear and Penitence in denying his Name, and promising never to offend again,² it would be almost an Act of Cruelty to pursue the Man any farther; however since he has left the Field with ill Language in his Mouth,

¹ Turner had also been High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1725; cf. Godfrey R. Park, *Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, Hull 1886, p. 301.

² 'I am sorry, Sir, that I have taken up so much of your Time and Paper, and promise never to trouble you again.'—'J. S.' in *York Courant*, Numb. 838, Tuesday, 3 Nov. 1741 [p. 3].

I shall send one Shot after him, which, I am confident, is too well founded to miss him.

A certain nasty Animal in *Egypt*, which, I think, *Herodotus* takes notice of,¹ when he finds he cannot possibly defend himself, and prey any longer, partly out of Malice, partly out of Policy, he lets fly backward full against his Adversary, and thereby covers his Retreat with the Fumes of his own Filth and Excrement.

As this Creature is naturally very *impotent*, and its chief Safety depends on a plentiful Discharge on such Occasions, the Naturalists affirm, that Self-preservation directs it to a certain Vegetable on the Banks of the River *Nile*, which constantly arms it with a proper Habit of Body against all Emergencies. I am,

Yours, L. S.

¹ Herodotus does not mention this interesting animal.

IV

IN THE CITY of London, meanwhile, was heard the bruit of the Yorkshire contest. The Court party, which felt themselves on the verge of failure, should the election not profit them, and the Tories, who were eager to increase their growing numbers in Parliament, both followed the contest with serious attention and read of its progress in their own particular papers. The enigmatical 'J. S.' was to see a portion of his long letter of the *Courant*, published in the *Champion* on 29 October by its editor, Captain Hercules Vinegar.¹ Doubtless it had been lifted from the *Courant* and was not sent up to London by the author. Sterne, to the contrary, wrote out a fresh copy of his first letter to 'J. S.' and directed it to the editor of the *Daily Gazetteer*, in which journal it appeared on 28 October.² The evidence contained in the fact that the *Daily Gazetteer* printed a version that differed in phrase from those of the *Courant* and of the pamphlet and, besides omitting those queries which alone appeared in *Query upon Query*, altered the order of the questions, leads to the conclusion that Sterne himself dispatched his letter to London. His second letter to 'J. S.' formed the leader of the same paper on 20 November.³ Sterne had thus journeyed to London, and thus made his first literary appearance in that city about two decades before his famous arrival there in person. In 1741, however, none knew the author of these

¹ *The Champion*; or, *The Evening Advertiser*, Numb. 307, Thursday, 29 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

² Numb. 1855, Wednesday, 28 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

³ Numb. 1869 Friday, 20 Nov. 1741 [p. 1].

letters and did not care to know him, for the letters were too quickly swallowed up by the diatribes of the day to gain more than passing notice. They were printed and read. They were then forgotten, but not before Captain Vinegar of the *Champion* had ridiculed them. It is unfortunate that this captain was no longer Henry Fielding, since his mockery of the young Sterne's efforts would have been something to cherish. Fielding, who had founded the paper under the familiar name of Hercules Vinegar, had ceased to write for it in June of that year and was in no way responsible for his successor's drollery.¹ Yet Fielding's paper did attack Sterne, and that is some consolation. On the morning following the appearance in the *Daily Gazetteer* of Sterne's first letter the *Champion* cried down a 'Query upon Query relating to the Merits of the Yorkshire-Candidates by one of the Legion', and dismissed the article by calling it a '*Gazetteer Whipt-Syllabub: Both Wind, and Emptiness*'.² The second letter the *Champion* was so generous as to characterize a bladder 'to buoy up a sinking Y—k-S—e CONVENTIONEER'.³ These were fine phrases which might provoke a smile, but they could not frighten the *Daily Gazetteer* on 20 November from printing a third letter from the pen of Sterne immediately below the second letter to 'J. S.'⁴ This letter, purporting to be written by a merchant resident at Leeds, was signed 'Q. Z.'; but, despite the disguise, the style and matter it revealed, added to its probable source in a lost issue of the *York Gazetteer*,

¹ Fielding, *Miscellanies*, London 1743, pp. xxxiv, xxxvi.

² Numb. 307 [p. 3].

³ Numb. 317 [p. 2].

⁴ *Daily Gazetteer*, Numb. 1869, Friday, 20 Nov. 1741 [p. 1].

leave little doubt who was the author. Not only did it discuss aspects of the campaign in a manner the very fibre of Sterne's political articles, but its satire was too neatly suave to issue from the head of a trader. Sterne in this letter achieved an enviable coup by intimating that the writer lived at Leeds. He boasted how the people of that city and of the surrounding country, which was in fact the seat of the Tory candidate and which contained the parsonage of Bardsey, had gone over almost to a man to Cholmley Turner and his cause. The dexterous impudence of announcing that the stronghold of the Tories was turned Whig was alone sufficient to bring wrath upon him. He once more made the usual allusions to 'J. S.' and to Ireland, which were a portion of his bag of tricks, and again revenged himself for the verses 'J. S.' had turned upon him.

Mr. *Turner's* Interest in this Part of the County (he wrote) continues to gain Ground every Day; the many ungenerous Methods made use of to lessen it have had no other Effect than the Opening People's Eyes, and discovering to them a desperate Cause, driven to seek Support from Artifice, Calumnies, and Chicanerie.

If it had not been evident before that the Party were reduc'd to their last Shifts, our Townsman *J. S's* Letter upon the Election¹ would have put the Point beyond Dispute; it is cover'd throughout with so thin and wretched a *Mask*, that one cannot help discerning under it the Last Words and Dying Speech of Mr. *F[ox]*; there wants nothing to make the Piece in full Character, but the usual Confession, That he was led astray by bad

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 836, Tuesday, 20 Oct. 1741 [p. 1].

Company; and a pious Exhortation, 'That his Dear Countrymen may take Warning by his untimely End.'¹

As to the two Candidates with regard to their Zeal for the Woollen Manufacture,—Self-Interest may be allow'd to direct every one whose Bread depends upon it to a fair Enquiry into each of their Conducts; I assure you it has me; and tho' Mr. *Turner* does not appear to have been for parting with so considerable a Branch of our 'Trade to *Ireland*, as the *Carding*, *Combing*, and *Spinning*, yet he has always been more zealous to root out that *Canker* from it, the Exportation of Wool to FRANCE,² than Mr. *Fox* can ever with any Reason be supposed to have been.

As for its being the Interest of Gentlemen on this Side the Water to let none of their Wool go to *France* as is said in a Letter in the *York Courant* of Oct. 3.³—Thus much I will venture to affirm with regard to it, That till the *Irish* (who are not generally the most refin'd Reasoners) can be convinc'd, that 'tis not for their Advantage to sell their Wool to the *highest* Bidder, Mr. *Turner*'s and every other *English* Gentleman's Endeavours will be ineffectual.

'Tis well known, that in the very last *Irish* Parlia-

¹ The 'Last Words and Dying Speeches' of malefactors were hawked about at public executions. At York, where Sterne had seen them, condemned criminals were made to suffer at Tyburn Scaffold, on Knavesmire, without Micklegate Bar; cf. Thomas P. Cooper, *History of the Castle of York*, London 1911, p. 264.

² Montesquieu perceived the efficacy of the prohibition; he wrote (*Œuvres*, Londres 1767, i, p. 456, *De L'Esprit des Lois*, Livre XX, chap. xii), 'L'Angleterre défend de faire sortir ses laines. . . Elle gêne le negociant; mais c'est en faveur du commerce.'

³ The opinion of J. S., *York Courant*, Numb. 838, Tuesday, 3 Nov. 1741 [p. 3]. 'Oct.' should be 'Nov.'

ment, a Proposition to prohibit the Wool-smuggling met with so universal a Disrelish, that it occasion'd as great a Clamour as the *Convention*;¹ the *Irish Gentlemen* in general alledging, that it would reduce the Rents of their *fine* Estates, increase the Price of Claret,² and hinder them from living in a *noble* and *hospitable* Manner.

Leeds, Nov. 14.

I am yours,

1741.

Q. Z.

The appearance of these letters in the London paper, while they were dully serviceable to the cause of election and reflected the serious efforts of Sterne to advance the popularity of his patron, did not betray even an intimation of the quarrel which was now unfolding among the disputants in Yorkshire. There was come a war between journalists and between printers, now excited by the approaching election and unable farther to restrain themselves. The war formed the climax of Sterne's political career. It reduced its participators to the rank of slanderers, sent political issues flying to the winds, and forced country and Court interest to wither away. Cæsar Ward came for the first time under the notice of the spectators. John Jackson, of Grape-Lane, stepped forward from his side to call his rival names; and, because the election was only two months distant, the chief victims of the squabble were driven naked into the arena. Without disguise and with rage burning in their hearts the Rev. Mr. Scott and

¹ 'Tis observable, that this Word has been in great Disgrace with the Disaffected ever since the CONVENTION which settled the Crown in the *Protestant* Line.'—? Sterne. For the Irish opinion concerning the proposal to enforce the laws against smuggling, see p. 61.

² The Tory drink.

Laurence Sterne were now to be revealed as the heroes of an excellent tale.

Although it is impossible to describe precisely in what manner the quarrel broke loose, since its history, which was chronicled in the *York Gazetteer* during October and November, is regrettably lost, there remain strong enough suggestions to point out its probable course. The initial step had been the verses from Pope with which 'J. S.' had stung his opponent. Sterne, as in later years, was a person dangerous to irritate, for his ready wit would readily undo the most stalwart of enemies. Having experienced the bad taste of those verses upon his tongue, he had written the humorous account of the animal that lived by the river Nile and drawn therein a portrait of 'J. S.'. Not satisfied with this indiscretion, he had doubtless written more open attacks in his own paper. One of these had appeared there on 29 September,¹ and others had followed. The slurs upon the person of 'J. S.' had no more than danced up to the disclosure of the Tory writer's identity before they retreated hastily, and would not have provoked the Vicar of Bardsey had not Sterne on Tuesday, 17 November, cast discretion aside and proclaimed James Scott to be the scoundrel 'J. S.'² None other than he was this Jacobite. The charge was far from trivial. To hold a benefice in the diocese of York and to be thought sympathetic to the miseries of Ireland and her industry was a monstrous union of extremities. It was not enough that Scott be compared to a nasty and impotent beast of Egypt, but he must be called upon to apologize for the laboured articles

¹ An allusion to this article is made on p. 48, note 2.

² I infer such was the case from Scott's letter.

in support of Fox, and see himself considered a convert to Popery. Such slander was not to be endured. With his mind made up to denounce Sterne's statement and to deny any responsibility for the articles of 'J. S.' he delivered a letter to Ward, who published it on the Tuesday¹ following the appearance of Sterne's calumny.

To L. S. at York.

SIR,

The Liberty you have taken in pointing out me, as Author of the Letters signed *J. S.* in the *York Courant*, will justify my troubling you with a few Lines by Way of Expostulation, which I am told is requisite in Vindication and Support of my own private Character.

To begin then with the Titles which you have thought fit to bestow upon me, I take it for granted, and you cannot deny, that one Aim you had in what you have written, was to insinuate to all who should read your Letters, that I am *an ignorant, scurrilous, uncharitable, proud, insulting Writer, that dare not own my Name.* This, I think, is pretty near the *Sum total* of my Character, in the Account as it stands drawn out by you, and laid before the Publick.—But, pray, Sir, what Authority have you for this Libel? Must your own Surmises, without previous Enquiry or due Information who *J. S.* was, necessarily be allowed a sufficient Foundation for you to point him out as a *Clergyman of Leeds?* and consequently to fix the Imputation on me, as those initial Letters can belong to no other? Is this acting consistently with that Spirit of Charity, which you observe

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 841, Tuesday, 24 Nov. 1741 [p. 3].

indeed justly, but surely without having the least Claim to it yourself, should be the Characteristick of a *Teacher of Truth*? Whatever you may think, Sir, of such a Conduct at present, I am confident that after you are told, as you are here, *that I have not been concerned as the Author of one Line of all that has been published since the present Contest was set on Foot*, 'twill be impossible to atone for it any other Way, than by making your Confession as publick as your Crime, and trying whether your Skill in wiping off Scandal, can be rendered as effectual, as your Endeavours to load me with it have been malicious and unjust.

Instead therefore of answering your Call upon me, in your last Letter, *to beg Pardon* for any Expression of mine that has been published, I shall conclude this with expecting that Satisfaction from you; which, as you profess some Regard to Justice and Truth, all the World must allow to be a reasonable Demand from,

Leeds, Nov. 19,

1741.

Sir, Yours, &c.

JAMES SCOTT.

However right or however wrong Scott may have known himself to be in writing this denial that he was the author of the letters signed 'J. S.' in the *Courant*, he had failed to foresee the manner in which Sterne would interpret it. He had looked no further than to his vindication and ignorantly trusted to fortune to give him success. His hope was vain. Sterne was the very man to be angered at his letter and to take quick steps to reply. He was reckless in those days, this incomprehensible, thin Vicar of Sutton. Upon the slightest evidence he would renew his attack,

trebled with proof, and cared not for the consequences, for to him James Scott was a dog of a Tory, a coward, and a liar into the bargain. Wildly he flung out an accusation by publishing, during the first days of December, a small pamphlet which he called a *Letter to the Rev. Mr. Scott, of Leeds*. In this lost pamphlet or advertisement, as it was described, he attempted to justify by a chronological argument his assertion that Scott was the 'J. S.' of the *Courant*. He asserted, according to the account of the letter given by Ward the following week, that the printer of the *Courant* had been the person who betrayed Scott's secret. He had discovered the name of 'J. S.' from a passage in the *Courant* of Tuesday, 29 September, wherein Cæsar Ward had reprimanded 'J. Wainman' for an abusive letter against 'J. S.' that reflected 'upon a worthy Clergyman in this County'. Sterne in all innocence had read this passage, perceived that Wainman's letter, in rebuking 'J. S.' for his impudent article, had been addressed to a clergyman at Leeds, and had thus known his man. By putting two and two together he had discovered James Scott; for, if 'J. S.' was a clergyman at Leeds, as it was said, that clergyman must be the curate of the Chapel of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in that city. Certainly the inference was correct. And since it was beyond question, Scott deserved to blush for the mendacious temerity of his denial. The letter, one may imagine, went on to state that Ward alone had betrayed his friend 'J. S.' and that Ward's betrayal was proof sufficient to justify Sterne. Such were doubtless the contents of this reply, for Ward was provoked to defend himself in the next *Courant*. The editor denounced Sterne's chronology and to his own satisfaction

tore it to shreds. It was not Scott who was the liar, he maintained upon the sanctity of his reputation; it was Sterne. This gentleman Whig had incriminated himself beyond recovery. By declaring he had drawn his conclusions from Ward's notice regarding 'J. Wainman' in the *Courant* for 29 September, he had insufficiently regarded the memory of the Tory printer as well as the ease with which Ward could refute his declaration.

On the day before he was to print his advice to 'J. Wainman', that is on Monday, 28 September, Cæsar Ward remembered to have received a letter that was eventually signed with the name of 'J. Wainman'. This he knew to be in the hand of a prebendary of York, Mr. Laurence Sterne. He asserted he was familiar with that cleric's handwriting, having no doubt often had occasion to publish in his paper articles that Sterne had sent to him. This being the situation, it was impossible, he continued, for Sterne to have gained his information from the notice in his paper the next day, since on the twenty-eighth Sterne pretended to know the identity of 'J. S.'. Thus in making his defence Sterne had deliberately twisted events and was no longer to be believed. To the names of Incendiary, White Curd, Butterfly, Ward now added Liar. The crown neared completion. Ward's letter, in itself the key to much of the foregoing narrative, read as follows:

*York, Dec. 8.*¹

A Printed Advertisement, by way of Letter to the Rev. Mr. *Scott* of *Leeds*, having been dispersed about the County last Week, wherein the Author, by what he calls

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 843, Tuesday, 8 Dec. 1741 [p. 4].

a Chronological Argument, has urg'd, that a Passage in the *York Courant* of *Sept.* 29th, was the Occasion of his insinuating the said Mr *Scott* to have been the Writer of several Letters relating to the present contested Election; I think it proper, in Vindication of myself, to set his Chronology right; and to state the Matter of Fact as it *really* was.

On *Monday* the 28th of *September*, a Letter was brought to Me by a Person, who said he had it given him in the *Minster*, and had Orders to pay for its being inserted in the *York Courant*. Upon perusing the same, I observed that it contain'd several scandalous and false Reflections; and therefore returned for Answer, that unless the Author would sign his Name, it should not appear in my Paper. Hereupon the Messenger went away, but instantly return'd with the said Letter, sign'd by the Name of *J. Wainman*; To this second Message I sent Word, that I knew the Hand-writing to be that of *Mr Laurence Sterne, Prebendary of St. Peter's, York*; and that I was not to be imposed upon in that Manner.

But to come to the Chronology of the Matter. I do affirm, that the above Letter, in Mr *Sterne's* Hand-Writing, concluded thus, *I am, Rev. Sir, Yours*; for which Reason, in the next Day's *Courant*, I excused the Omission thereof in the following Manner:

When the Writer of a Letter sent Yesterday to the Printing-Office, reflecting upon a worthy Clergyman in this County, and sign'd J. Wainman, thinks fit to subscribe his own Name, it will be soon enough to insert it.

Now the Reader will hereby at once observe, that my saying in the Paper of *Tuesday, September 29th*, that

I had refused a Letter signed *J. Wainman*, reflecting on a worthy Clergyman in this Diocese, was owing to the said Letter's concluding with the Words, *I am, Rev. Sir, Yours*; and consequently that Mr *Sterne*, who, in his Letter sent to me, on *Monday, September 28th*, called *J. S. by the Stile of Rev. Sir*, could not borrow that Appellation from a Passage in the *York Courant* of the Day after. So much for this Gentleman's Skill in Chronology; but I would advise him next Time he abuses me to have a better Memory.

I can't help taking Notice of one Circumstance more, *viz.* on *Thursday* the 22d. of *October*, a Letter was brought to me in Vindication of Mr *Turner*, by Way of *Quære*, in which there were some Passages I made Objections to, whereupon the Messenger went away, and return'd again with those obnoxious Passages expunged, and I agreed to insert it in the next Paper: But the same Evening the abovementioned Mr *Sterne* came to me, and said, *He had made some Mistakes in the Letter which He had sent that Evening, and particularly by inserting the word Not superfluously*; whereupon I gave him his Letter, and he made some few Alterations in it, and ask'd me, *Why I had objected to any Expressions in it?* to which I gave for Answer, *That they were not Arguments, but personal Abuses*; and I added these Words, *Mr Sterne, By an Expression therein, you seem to insinuate, as if J. S. the Letter-Writer in the Courant, was a Clergyman, I do assure you that he is not a Clergyman.*

As to the Compliments the Writer of the Advertisement, distributed last Week, is pleas'd to pay Me as Printer of the *York Courant*, I pass them over un-

noticed as they deserve; and only add, that the above Assertions of mine are *strictly* and *truly* MATTER OF FACT; and upon this I stake my Reputation.

CAESAR WARD.

J. S., the following week, delighted with the apparent death-blow given by Ward to the scatter-brained Yorick, contributed yet another lampoon upon him.

Mr Pope against L. S. once more.

A Wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells;
A Word-Catcher that lives on Syllables.
Who shames this Scribbler? break one Cobweb thro',
He spins the slight self-pleasing Thread a-new:
Destroy his Fib, or Sophistry, in vain,
The Creature 's at his dirty Work again,
Thron'd in the Centre of his thin Designs,
Proud of a vast Extent of flimzy Lines.¹

From his humble Servant,

J. S.²

Just at this moment Sterne had reason to retreat. With enemy and avenger crying at his heels how great were his lies and tossing upon him the approbrious names of Word-Catcher, spider, and Creature, he might lose honour by surrender but not lay himself open to further satire. A retreat was advisable. The young vicar had gone too far. Already he had heard, while passing one of the Whig coffee-houses of an evening, the verses of 'J. S.' sung with full appreciation of their truth. But Sterne did not retreat. He ordered an answer to Ward's letter to be prepared for his own paper. On 15 December, one week after Ward

¹ Elwin and Courthorpe, *Works of Alexander Pope*, London 1881, iii. pp. 254, 278, *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, ll. 165-6, 89-94.

² *York Courant*, Numb. 844, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 1].

had dared him to repeat his defence, the answer appeared in an issue of the *York Gazetteer* that has been most fortunately preserved. The reply, which took the form of a statement, was signed by Jackson, but the several strokes of wit it reveals suggest the fact that Sterne himself may have bestowed more than a helping hand to the printer's script.

York, Dec. 15. 1741.

Whereas *Cæsar Ward* in order to justify his Conduct with regard to Mr. Scot, has declar'd in his last Week's Courant, that the Letter subscrib'd, *I am, Rev. Sir, Yours*, was offer'd to him in the Hand-Writing of the Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne; This is to acquaint the Publick, that I am desired by that Worthy Gentleman, to make use of His Name, and declare for him in a publick and Solemn Manner, That the Assertion of *Cæsar Ward* is a downright Falsehood; and that he (Mr. Laurence Sterne) neither Compos'd that Letter, nor transcrib'd it: The Letter (attached upon Oath and certified upon the back of it to be the same carried, to *Cæsar Ward*) is now lodg'd with Mr. Graves,¹ Attorney in *Petergate*, where any Person, acquainted with Mr. Laurence Sterne's Hand, may see it.

As my Brother-Printer has staked his Reputation upon this Point, and has publicly lost it, I may justly hope to draw some Advantage to my Self from it; Since the Publick for the future can never depend upon his VERACITY, the only Substantial Qualification for one in our Business. 'Tis well however for him that he did

¹ John Graves, attorney at law, in Petergate; cf. *York Courant*, Numb. 1023, Tuesday, 21 May 1745 [p. 3].

not depose upon *Oath* what he has asserted upon his *Reputation*; for then he might have forfeited both It and his *Ears*¹ together, which in all Senses wou'd totally have ruin'd him in the Capacity of News-Monger.

I am further authoriz'd by the Gentleman above mention'd to declare in His name, and in the strongest manner I please, That *Cæsar Ward* did not assure him either at the Time he speaks of, or at any other time whatever, that J. S., the Letter-writer in the COURANT was not a Clergyman. My Brother, when he *invented* and printed this Falsehood, had to be sure forgot that, but about an Hour and a half before this pretended Declaration of His, when the Letter by way of Quære was carried to him by Mr. Graves and Mr. Emmanuel Gregson, he receiv'd it with this Reflection, That it was '*Vicar against Vicar*'. This if requir'd will be attested upon both their Oaths.

And He will not *dare* to deny, that, even since Mr. Scott thought proper to disown the Brats laid to him, He has said to Gentlemen of Credit and Distinction, that the Author of those Letters, sign'd J. S. dated from Leeds, was really a Clergyman. And if a Clergyman, Mr. Scott has told us in the COURANT that it fixes it upon *Him*, so that it is left to *Him* and *Cæsar Ward* to settle it betwixt *themselves*.

JOHN JACKSON.²

Although the contents of this advertisement were so assured in tone that they could not easily be questioned, the problem at the base of the matter, namely, who it was

¹ The penalty for perjury. Cf. p. 110.

² *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 3].

that gave the lie, finds its beginning in the notice Ward had printed in the *Courant* on 29 September. It will be remembered that he had there objected to the letter signed 'J. Wainman' and informed '*the Vicar, who penn'd it, that the Printer of this Paper is not to be impos'd upon by counterfeited Letters from Guisbrough nor fictitious Names in York*'. Clearly in those obscure lines he signified that Sterne had sent him letters from York and from Guisborough under a false signature, and that he would print none of them until Sterne dared to attach his own name. In the discussion that ensued concerning this statement Sterne had denied writing the letter, signed 'J. Wainman', and had gone so far as to procure that letter and set it on view at the house of an attorney in Petergate, where those who were familiar with his handwriting might satisfy themselves that he had not written it. Sterne had neither composed nor transcribed that letter. Whether 'J. Wainman' was John Wainman who voted for Turner, or Joseph Wainman who resided at York, he was not Sterne. That in this he told the truth seems evident, since he could not safely have exhibited a copy of the letter written out by Jackson or himself. But in believing him in the right, one must bear in mind one suspicious circumstance. Sterne had been able to procure the original letter written by 'J. Wainman'. One would like to discover by what means this ephemeral manuscript came into his possession the moment he had need of it.

Beyond the denial that he had not written this letter Sterne did not go in his attempt to refute the allegations contained in Ward's first notice. Since he never disclaimed writing letters to Ward from York and Guisborough dur-

ing September, it may be concluded that he had done so. In his position as journalist to Cholmley Turner he had found occasion to confer with him at Kirkleatham and from there had written letters to the *Courant*, which he posted from Guisborough, the posting town that lay about four miles to the south of Kirkleatham. Indeed he had more than one reason to be near Guisborough at this time, since there lived nearby a friend far more intimate than Turner could ever be. John Hall-Stevenson,¹ more famously known as the Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*, was the master of Skelton Castle, a gloomy, Gothic house not far from Guisborough. Sterne had known Hall at Cambridge, and during the period of preparatory study for his great novel, while making his frequent visits, had read through the curious library at Skelton. In later years he sported with the society of Demoniacs there gathered together for fishing, drinking, and jesting. As early as 1741 he doubtless came thither to enjoy the hospitality of his friend, for he was at that time closely associated with him. It has not before been observed that when, on 7 February 1739-40, John Hall was married to Anne Stevenson, the heiress of a wealthy squire in county Durham, Laurence Sterne was the officiating clergyman. The friendship formed at Cambridge had thus early proved sentimental. In announcing the marriage, the London paper described Hall, who now added the name of Stevenson to his own, as a resident of London, but did not mention the parish where the ceremony had taken place.² The *York Courant* bore further

¹ John Hall is mentioned as 'of Skelton Castle' in the Poll Book for 1742; cf. p. 104.

² *The London and Country Journal*, Numb. lx, 19 Feb. 1739-40, p. 4. This paper gives the date Thursday, 7 Feb.

testimony to the effect that Sterne had married the couple.¹ Where the marriage was solemnized is a mystery. Mr. Thomas Cooper, of York, has kindly searched the registers of Skelton, Lanchester,² Durham Cathedral, Egglescliffe, and Medomsley without success. Could the marriage have occurred in London, then Sterne must have travelled up to town for a brief sojourn. The occasion in this respect remains perplexing but does not, however, prevent one from realizing the intimacy that then existed between the two men and the excellent reasons Sterne may have had in the autumn of 1741 to be at Guisborough, addressing correspondence to the printer of the *Courant*.

The greater quarrel that had risen between Sterne and 'J. S.' and between Jackson and Cæsar Ward had begun in this very question of the reality of 'J. Wainman'. As early as September, when writing the letters from Guisborough, Sterne showed himself certain of the identity of 'J. S.', and had continued in his assurance through Jackson's important letter. With Ward on his side declaring upon his honour that Sterne was mistaken in his inference, and with Jackson ready to attest upon oath that Ward had given away the name of 'J. S.', it is now difficult to separate truth from falsehood. Ward had declared that the anonymous writer was a merchant residing at Leeds. 'J. S.' had informed Sterne he was 'not a Clergyman, but a Merchant in the Woollen-Trade'. Scott had then come

¹ Numb. 748, Tuesday, 12 Feb. 1740 [p. 3]: 'Last Week John Hall, of Skelton-Castle, Esq; was married to Miss Stephenson, a young Lady of 25,000*l.* Fortune. The Ceremony was perform'd by the Rev. Mr. Sterne of Sutton-Forest.'

² Anne was daughter of Ambrose Stevenson, of the Manor House, Lanchester, a village eight miles north-west of Durham.

forward in his own person and asserted that he had not written 'one Line of all that has been published since the present Contest was set on Foot'. To this Ward added his letter, which supposedly broke down Sterne's chronological argument. To combat these statements required of Sterne a greater certainty than that of inference. Sterne had replied. The discussion ceased.

The defence of Scott and Ward, however honest it may have appeared, was not altogether free from the suspicion that each had said the thing that is not; and, although it should claim serious respect, it is somewhat unnecessary before the evidence of a manuscript formerly preserved at the seat of Sir John Ingilby, at Ripley Castle, near Ripon. This manuscript was a contemporary extract of the Letter which 'J. S.' published in the *Courant* on 5 January 1741-2.¹ The authorship of this letter was therein attributed to one Joseph Shepherd.² Such contemporary evidence as this does upon the surface much damage to the cause of Sterne and Jackson, since it issued from the knowledge of a supposed third person. Joseph Shepherd, however, is an enigma. If the fellow ever wrote for the *Courant*, he was a merchant in the woollen trade at Leeds; and if a merchant, he would probably have been a freeholder in order to take much part in the discussions concerning a county election. He was not a freeholder, since the poll books of 1742 record none of that name whose abode was at Leeds.³ He did not vote for Fox. If he was

¹ Cf. p. 102.

² Historical Manuscripts Commission, Appendix, Sixth Report, Pts. I, II, London 1877, p. 363. Sir William Ingilby, Bart., of Ripley Castle, informs me the manuscript has since disappeared.

³ *The Poll for a Representative in Parliament for the County of York*,

as familiar with Pope as he shows himself to be, he would have been a most precocious merchant.¹ He may have been, it seems, a person of no importance at all. He may have lived at Leeds, but he does not appear to have been 'J. S.' It is quite possible, one may infer, that his name was mentioned in the Ripley manuscripts either from error or from an intent to cloak the true author.

Over against the embattled defence of Scott and his printer there stands, even when the truthfulness of the Tories is admitted, a partial justification of Sterne and John Jackson. They had remained almost firm in their original declaration, they had not at all shifted the sense of their original charge that 'J. S.' was the Vicar of Bardsey. In their last defence they had published a statement, which in terms was so naked, so insulting, and in proof so simple, that Ward and Scott, had they felt themselves able to break down the accusations, would have come forth immediately. They never replied, for no mention of the dispute appeared thereafter in the *York Courant*. Possibly they chose to ignore the ruffians of the *Gazetteer*, but more likely they were at a loss to make answer. Their silence suggests that Sterne obliged them to retreat, lest in a mock retort they endanger themselves.

How Sterne came to his own conclusions with regard to 'J. S.' one can only imagine. His suspicions which had

York: Printed by Ward and Chandler . . . 1742, pp. 90-1 a. A Joseph Shepherd, of Bradford, and another, of Myton, are the only two who polled for Fox. Cf. *The Poll for the County of York*, York: Printed by John Jackson . . . [1742], p. 205. York Minster Library, Hailstone, C. 2.

¹ Shepherd's name is mentioned neither by Foster nor by Venn in their respective lists of alumni of the two universities. It was never indexed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

been assured by Ward's remarking that vicar was against vicar were probably strengthened by the gossip at the coffee-houses which Sterne frequented at York. In a small community, where every one's business was better known to his neighbour than to himself, it is likely that wise heads were nodding over their surmises shortly after the first letter from 'J. S.'. If the articles themselves had not attracted this attention, the verses from Pope could not have failed to do so, and Sterne had reason to be the first one to hear the name of 'J. S.' confided in him 'as the Opinion of Thousands'. The busybodies of York were too well acquainted with Scott to go far wrong, for they were familiar with the relations in which he stood with the Tory party and, in particular, with George Fox, of Bramham, the present candidate.

James Scott, even as early as 1734, had allied himself with the Tories of Yorkshire. He had supported, during the contested election of that year, Sir Miles Stapylton in his campaign to be elected Knight of the Shire, and had then been so potent a follower that he was counted among those gentlemen who had met at York prior to the election on the behalf of their candidate.¹ Some five or six years after that struggle, shortly before the opening of the present contest, he had joined Dr. Burton and George Fox in their attempt to establish the Tory hospital at York, and had contributed a yearly sum to be devoted to the building and its maintenance.² He had also gained the favour of the Tory Lady Bountiful, Lady Elizabeth Hastings, who

¹ Thomas Lashley, *Lashley's York Miscellany*, York 1734, p. 78. York Public Library, Y. 329.

² *An Account of the Publick Hospital . . . in the County of York*, York 1743, p. 37. York Minster Library, Hailstone, B. 8.

increased the value of his living by a gift of £200.¹ Yet despite an affiliation to the Tory party, which these circumstances evince, they are, nevertheless, of little importance in proving his authorship of the letters of 'J. S.', when compared with two events in his career, the appointment to the chaplaincy of the Prince of Wales and the presentation to the vicarage of Bardsey.

Late in December 1741 the prebendary of North Newbald, the Rev. Mr. Robert Hitch, overheated himself while canvassing for votes for Cholmley Turner and died suddenly,² and thus left vacant a chaplaincy to Frederick, Prince of Wales. James Scott in the memoir of his son was later described as a Domestic Chaplain to this very Prince.³ Whether or not Scott was chosen to succeed Hitch I cannot tell, since I have failed to discover any record of this appointment. I can do no more than suggest that the preferment was granted to Scott as a reward for some political work. As Frederick was especially noted for his violent opposition to Walpole, his counsellors, it seems, having deemed it advisable that the care of his soul be entrusted to a Tory clergyman, bestowed the honour upon Scott. As he had, let us suppose, lately championed George Fox during the great contested election by writing articles in the *York Courant*, he was considered worthy to become a chaplain in the room of the late Robert Hitch, the Whig.

¹ William White, *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, Sheffield 1838, p. 497. Lady Elizabeth Hastings, of Ledstone Hall, co. York., was a daughter of George, 8th Earl of Huntingdon.

² Thomas Gent, *Life of Thomas Gent*, London 1832, p. 194.

³ James Scott, *Sermons*, London 1816, p. ii.

If, however, the appointment of Scott to the chaplaincy of the Prince is too vague to become argument in support of his authorship of the letters, his relations with George Fox appear to settle the question with finality. When Robert, Lord Bingley, the creator of Bramham Park, died in the spring of 1731, he bequeathed his Yorkshire estates, among which lay the parish of Bardsey, to his daughter Harriet, who, one recalls, married shortly after her father's death the Tory candidate in the present contest. In his will, which was proved in April 1731, Lord Bingley had mentioned the gallant John Campbell, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich,¹ a trustee of his rich possessions, but had not foreseen the litigation that would annoy his friend. In 1732 Argyll, famous as the rival of Marlborough and the commander of the forces that had defeated the Jacobites in the rebellion of 1715, found himself a defendant in a suit brought against him and the other trustees by George Fox and his wife.² The plaintiffs protested that they had not benefited under the terms of Lord Bingley's will, since the trustees had refused to act without the consent of the court. Although the case dragged on until 1740, when it was tried before Lord Hardwicke,³ it is of no interest here save as an indication of the state of affairs at Bramham in 1732, the year in which James Scott was presented to the living of Bardsey. In that and the consequent year Fox by a technicality was powerless to manage his estate in legal right. Although the gift of the living of Bardsey was

¹ Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Probate Registry, Somerset House: Isham 86.

² Public Record Office: *Chancery Proceedings 1714-1758*, 13. 2433; id., 27. 2459.

³ Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 36,079, f. 43.

plainly invested in him, as the heir by marriage of the late Lord Bingley, he could not then grant the presentation himself. The right, therefore, lay in the power of the Duke of Argyll and the other trustees, who presented Scott to the living 7 July 1732. '*Præsentatus per Prænobilem Johannem Ducem de Argyle & Greenwich*'¹ was the entry concerning the admission in the *Book of Institutions* at York. Scott now looked upon Fox as his patron. He was in every way fitted to defend him in the election against the machinations of the Whigs. He was now an important Tory, he was now under the thumb of Fox, and, when the election took place, he voted for his patron.²

Doubts, suppositions, suggestions can readily turn black white and wash clean the sinner. They can also shift the balance of evidence to the favour of Sterne. There remains on the one hand the presence of Joseph Shepherd, and on the other the opinions and activities of James Scott. To unfrock either of these to discover the identity of this 'J. S.', this Junius, is almost impossible. If he were Shepherd, he was doubtless too obscure to be further noticed; if he were Scott, he chose to remain unknown that he might be protected from the soilure of politics, that he might not be attacked in company with Sterne, Dr. Burton, the Pre-

¹ Diocesan Registry: *Institutions of the Diocese of York, 1727-33*, p. 290. '*Præsentatus per Prænobilem Johannem . . . Gul: Hamilton, Hospitii Lincoln: in Com: Midlx: Arm: et Benj: Hoare de London Goldsmith Veros & Indubitatos dictæ Vicariæ (ut asseritur) Patronos.*' Hamilton and Hoare were trustees of Lord Bingley's estate and thus held the advowson of Bardsey, which ordinarily would be invested in Harriet and her husband. On the day that the institution was recorded James Scott received a dispensation of absence from Bardsey (*ibid.*). He lived at Leeds.

² *The Poll for a Representative in Parliament for the County of York*, York 1742, p. 90 a.

centor, and even Robert Walpole. Although Scott probably lied, and although Sterne and Jackson were probably in the right, the disguise of 'J. S.' remains still before one and he is not seen. He goes to join Donatello, Hawthorne's friend, of whom none shall ever know to what extent his hidden ears were pointed and tipped with fur.

V

SIMULTANEOUS with the quarrel between Sterne and Scott, the excitement over the election, which was but one month off, now waxed intense. In London, where the new Parliament had met on the first of December, the fall of Walpole was expected, for the Opposition, which had gained power in 1734, were about to witness victory. 'The Parliament is all in a flame,' Mrs. Montagu was writing to her mother on the twelfth, 'the Court have had but a majority of seven.'¹ A month later Pulteney was to deliver his long-cherished attack by proposing to refer to a secret Committee the papers relating to the war. Walpole was to reply and gain a majority of only three votes. He was immediately to lose that majority; he was at the last moment to leap into the peerage, and to resign all his offices on 11 February. Some such catastrophe was already before the Whigs in December, and they were prepared to grasp at any straw for support. To the election in Yorkshire, which might aid them in this crisis, they looked with eagerness. Their interest was intent and served to quicken the passions alive in the city of York.

Under the great Minster there was a hallooing and scurrying, a shouting in the papers, and political dinners in the taverns. On the third of December the gentlemen in Turner's interest assembled once again at the George

¹ *Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. Emily J. Climençon, London 1906, i, p. 93.

Inn to concert proper methods of bringing in the Freeholders to poll.¹ The Tories were doing likewise.² Sterne, to escape the pressure of such gatherings as well as the labour of writing for the *York Gazetteer*, most likely took refuge in the music club which met every Wednesday at the George³ under the hospitable patronage of its Whig landlord, Christopher Oldfield. Here no doubt he fiddled away with a 'Ptr . . . r . . . ing—twing—twang—prut—trut— 'tis a cursed bad fiddle . . . Diddle diddle, diddle diddle, diddle diddle, dum . . . Twaddle diddle, tweddle diddle,—twiddle diddle,—twoddle diddle,—twuddle diddle,—prut-trut—krish—krash—krush',⁴ and so on until he became expert. But at this moment his chief occupation was politics. He had already composed another letter of the same violent order as his former and acknowledged writings,⁵ and published it on the second of December in the London journal, the *Daily Gazetteer*. This reply to an article, which Ward had scooped out of *Common Sense* for the *Courant*,⁶ he published in his own *Gazetteer* on the eighth,⁷ and again on the fifteenth.⁸

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 841, Tuesday, 24 Nov. 1741 [p. 3].

² *Ibid.*

³ *Id.*, Numb. 833, Tuesday, 29 Sept. 1741 [p. 2].

⁴ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. V, chap. xv, p. 152.

⁵ Again my ascription.

⁶ Numb. 841, Tuesday 24 Nov. 1741 [p. 1].

⁷ Because of a copy of Sterne's letter, dated 8 Dec. 1741, and 'Reprinted from the *York Gazetteer*', once preserved at the Manor House, TempleNewsam, near Leeds, I conclude that Sterne published it in his paper on that day. It appeared in the *York Gazetteer* the following week. Sterne probably struck off a few copies in the form of handbills; cf. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, London 1913, viii, p. 103.

⁸ *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 3].

To the PROTESTANT Freeholders of the County of YORK.

Gentlemen,

By the Industry of Mr. Fox or his Friends, a Paper extracted from COMMON SENSE¹ was last Week dispersed throughout this County, and *very* seriously recommended to your Perusal.

Tho' it is not to be imagin'd that such a senseless Piece of Raving and Abuse can possibly meet with any Degree of Credit and Success, yet by way of caution against this, as well as the future Applications from the same Quarter, It may not be amiss to acquaint you, that the Author of it is a Zealous, Bigotted *Irish* Papist.²

I know not what could tempt him to address himself to so great, so rich, so powerful a Body of Protestants as the Freeholders of this County, and in a Cause too, where their *true* Interest and his are inconsistent, unless we may impute it to the *Native* Assurance of his *Country* and the *Officious* Saint-Errantry of his Religion; And perhaps *They* may lead him on still further,—For if once his Friends flatter him into an Opinion, That he has

¹ Originally published in *Common Sense: or, The Englishman's Journal*, Numb. 248, Saturday, 14 Nov. 1741.

² This article, which arouses Sterne's ire, was an attack upon his first letter to 'J. S.', published in the *Daily Gazetteer*. The London writer scoffed at Sterne by showing sympathy for Turner. 'The Person,' he wrote, 'whose Interest is so strenuously espoused by the ministerial Hirelings may, for aught I know, be as unexceptionable a Gentleman as any in the Kingdom; but, if he be so, he is very unfortunate, in his Friendships:—It will put the World upon enquiring, by what Kind of Conduct he could draw upon himself this Disgrace, this Abuse, this Satyr, to be recommended by such People.' *York Courant*, Numb. 841, Tuesday, 24 Nov. 1741 [p. 1].

writ you out of Love either with your *King* or *Countryman*, The next Thing He presents you with will be a modest Address both against your *Liberty* and *Religion*.

That a Gentleman of Mr. Turner's undoubted Aver-sion to a Popish King and Church should draw upon Himself the Inveteracy of *this* Writer—That He should never be able to give a Vote in Parliament but what was disagreeable and disgusting to him, is no more difficult to be accounted for, than This is easy to be determined, viz. *Whether the Gentleman recommended or the Gentleman abused by a bigotted Irish Papist will be the most proper Representative of the PROTESTANT Freeholders of this County in an English House of Commons?*

York, Nov, 30.

I am, Gentlemen, Yours.

1741.

On 15 December Sterne was again maliciously decrying the Tories and praising his candidate, if, as seems likely, the squibs at the back of the *York Gazetteer* for that date may be attributed to him.

'Tis now confirm'd from all parts of the County (was the purport of one of these) that no Doubt at all is made of Mr. Turner's carrying his Election for the County, his Interest having been much strengthened by the undeserved Abuse he has received from the Irish, Popish, Author of Common Sense.¹

Another was a most witty sally against the ostentatious assurance of the Tories.

Whe [*sic*] hear from Pontefract that on Tuesday last Sir John Bland's Steward, attended by one or two Gentlemen,

¹ *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 4].

came to this Town to treat the Freeholders in Favour of Mr. Fox. For this Purpose a grand Entertainment was provided at the Sign of the Bull and Boar; but, not being able to prevail upon any more than five Persons who have Votes to come at them (tho' there are above ninety in Pontefract)¹ vex'd at this Disappointment they made their Stay here too short to create only great Profit to their Landlord.

To cap this insult Sterne then described the glorious meeting, held at the Star in Stonegate, to pump up enthusiasm for Cholmley Turner.

And, Yesterday Sir Rowland Winn, and several other Gentlemen, accompanied by the Corporation, made an Entertainment at the Star for the Friends of Mr. Turner; to which the Freeholders came almost to a Man, where they expressed the highest Satisfaction upon the Occasion; and amongst many Loyal and honest Healths that were then toasted, they drank to Mr. Turner's good Success Prosperity to the County of York and to the Trade thereof, and that we may never want a HOME BORN BAIRN to *represent* the one and *protect* the other.²

With this so modern sentiment in their hearts the Whigs were certain to swell the prestige of their party. One wonders whether a toast was drunk to Sterne, and whether upon that occasion Phutatorius suffered from the wayward rolling of a certain hot chestnut.³

The long campaigns were now drawing to a feverish close. On 23 December the House of Commons ordered the Speaker to issue a warrant to the Clerk of the Crown

¹ This is no misstatement. Seven freeholders of Pontefract polled for Fox and sixty-nine for Turner; cf. *Poll for a Representative . . . of York*, York 1742, pp. 112 a, 114-15 b.

² *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 4].

³ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, ii, Bk. IV, chap. xxvii, pp. 86-94.

to make a new writ for the election of a Knight of the Shire to serve in the present Parliament for the county of York.¹ Word of this order reached York soon after only to find the city in the clutches of full winter. The task of electioneering throughout the fall had been heavily impeded by heavy snow-storms and frosts which had set in from the month of September. The river Ouse was a sheet of ice, so that no vessels could pass along it. When, on the twenty-seventh of December, the thaw came suddenly, the waters rose to such a height that the quaint and venerable Ouse bridge was in danger of collapsing, the Lord Mayor's barge actually sank, and 'all the Boates & Barges above Bridge (except the Ferry Boat at Worth street Postern) was sunk or Broke to pieces'.² Still, notwithstanding the cold and ice, politicians had scurried about, haranguing and bribing the freeholders. One of these, the Rev. Mr. Hitch, had been as busy as his brothers on behalf of Turner, but had been too careless of the weather. This

fine tall Personage, my Patron (wrote the ever eloquent Thomas Gent, the famous printer and historiographer) the Rev. Mr. Hitch aforesaid . . . had, I believe, over-heated himself at the Strife about obtaining Votes for Members of Parliament, that threw him into a mortal Fever, which on the 26th of December convey'd his precious Soul, I hope, into the blessed Regions of a glorious Immortality.³

By his death the prebendal stall of North Newbald was left for disposal by the Dean and Chapter. Not many days

¹ *Journals of the House of Commons*, xxiv, p. 37.

² Thomas Beckwith, *History of York*, MS., York Minster Library, MSS. cupboard.

³ Thomas Gent, *op. cit.*, p. 194. Text from the manuscript, York Minster Library, Hailstone, C. 6.

later, on 5 January, Sterne, in reward for his writings, resigned the prebend of Givendale and was admitted to the canonry of North Newbald.¹ Gent did not fail to record that 'Mr. Lawrence Sterne, Nephew to a Doctor of Divinity of that Name' had obtained this prebend.²

However intense the pleasure of this preferment, it was somewhat impaired the same day by a further attack from 'J. S.' as well as a gift to Canon Sterne of a set of verses. 'J. S.' in the *Courant*³ reiterated his criticisms of Turner, and maintained the validity of his original queries.

It is evident (he said) to every Man of common Honesty and common Sense, that they have *never yet been answer'd*, notwithstanding the many frivolous Attempts, and the Reams of Paper wasted to that Purpose, I am not so vain as to say this, wholly on my own Judgment, No! I have with Pleasure heard it as the Opinion of Thousands.

He scored Sterne's plea that Turner had voted against Walpole's Excise Bill, and thereby won a small victory. Even the Whigs realized that it was a merit 'to oppose the pernicious Schemes of their Grand Patron'. George Fox, he urged, was much interested in preventing the running of wool to France. He had already made efforts to correct that abuse. This was a fact, and 'such a one, as the very *Gazetteers themselves*, though the most abandon'd, profligate Set of Fellows, that ever put Pen to Paper, have not had the Impudence to deny'.

The other attack against Sterne, butterfly, prebendary, and profligate fellow, was

¹ Brit. Mus., Add. Charters, 16,161; Diocesan Registry, York: *Subscription Book 1722-1757*, under date, 5 Jan. 1741-2.

² Gent, op. cit., p. 195.

³ Numb. 847, Tuesday, 5 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 1].

A New Year's Gift *for* L—y.¹

Grave Legends tell, nor is it yet deny'd,
That old St. Lawrence on a Grid-Iron fry'd ;
Our young St. Lawrence is so wond'rous dry,
I'll wager, that he'd sooner *burn than fry*.
And, try to *roast* him—he 's so lean and *sallow*,
'Tis Ten to One he drops *more T—d than Tallow*.

In the election itself, which opened at York Castle one week later, Sterne's acquaintances grouped themselves in much the same positions they were to occupy with respect to him during the next twenty years. Whigs in general were to be his friends and Tories the object of his ridicule. It may appear incongruous to-day that he allowed political differences to create for him his circles of friends and fools, that even this statement may be more than a pedantic and awkward observation. But when one recalls how the Tory Swift broke away from Addison and Steele because of their allegiance to the Whigs, it is not difficult to conceive Sterne's relations with his neighbours as the result of political faction. It is true that he quarrelled with Jaques, his uncle, and that in his *Political Romance* he later ridiculed Dr. Francis Topham, who now voted for Turner;² it is equally true that one of his best friends was that Marmaduke Fothergill, who not only was allied with Burton in the development of the County Hospital³ but who gave

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 847, Tuesday, 5 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

² *Poll for a Representative in Parliament for the County of York*, York: Printed by Ward and Chandler . . . 1742, p. 174a.

³ He was the son of Marmaduke Fothergill, of London (d. 1737, cf. deed of gift of books to York Minster Library in that collection), and with Drake a surgeon in the County Hospital. He was not a prebendary, as has been said by Fitzgerald and quoted by Cross (*Works of Laurence Sterne*, New York 1907, *Letters*, i. 182 n.). Probably because he had advised him to get preferment before literary fame,

in the present election his vote to George Fox.¹ There were these and doubtless others, but they scarce affect the general aspect of Sterne's relations with his fellows, for against them may be set the large group of men who by their political convictions either joined with Sterne in the years to come or departed in all ways from his sympathy.

Chief of those who voted for Turner was Richard Osbaldeston, the Dean,² and next in dignity the Precentor himself.³ Also allied to the Whigs was John Hall-Stevenson, of Skelton Castle,⁴ who doubtless went with Sterne to the Castle Yard to give his vote. Charles Weddell, of York,⁵ who later associated with Sterne, polled for Turner, as well as Thomas Place, the Recorder and friend of Dr. Sterne;⁶ the Rev. Mr. Zachariah Blake, master of St. Peter's School at York, whose son, John Blake, was one day to seek earnest advice from Sterne; the frail Dr. Mark Braithwaite;⁷ Godfrey Bosville, of Gunthwaite;⁸ and

Sterne called him 'my best of critics and well wishers' (Cross, *Life of Sterne*, New Haven 1925, ii, p. 231). The death of this life-long friend occurred 13 Aug. 1778 (*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1778, p. 392). His professional activities are mentioned in *An Account of the Publick Hospital*, York 1743, York Minster Library, Hailstone, B. 8, and in the *York Courant*.

¹ *Poll Book*, Ward's ed., p. 166 a.

² *Id.*, p. 173b.

³ *Id.*, p. 174b.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 141b.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 174b. Sterne mentioned this friend in an unpublished letter of 1758.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 173b. Place was Sterne's ally in the prosecution of Burton. cf. Burton, *British Liberty Endanger'd*, London 1749, p. 33, York Minster Library, J. xxx, 15.

⁷ Sterne's *Mark Slender* in the *Political Romance*. He died during the week of 14-21 Aug. 1750; cf. *York Courant*, Numb. 1297, Tuesday, 21 Aug. 1750 [p. 2].

⁸ Boswell's 'Yorkshire chief' (*Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, Oxford, 1887, iii, p. 439). He was probably intimate with Sterne, for he kept by him a copy of Sterne's famous letter to his uncle; cf. p. 33, note 2.

Charles Cowper, of Oswaldkirk, one of Sterne's many clerical cronies.¹ In opposition to these there had voted for Fox not only James Scott, but Dr. John Burton,² and Philip Harland.³

Although Burton's vote did no more than add a faggot to the pyre Sterne was building beneath him, Philip Harland, son of the squire of Sutton, by voting against Cholmley Turner helped to widen the breach that existed between himself and the vicar.⁴ With this proud descendant of a modern family Sterne was not 'upon a very friendly footing',⁵ and had doubtless entered into many arguments with him over the respective merits of the candidates. The estrangement between the men had even made itself felt in the parish where, it is said, Sterne was not a popular figure. John Croft remembered that upon one occasion at least the parishioners had been so irritated by his conduct that they 'were ready to riot and mob Laurie'.⁶ Such was probably the case, but the inference therefrom that Sterne was disliked in the community is hardly tenable. His remarkable attendance to ecclesiastical duties⁷ had certainly abetted his popularity. Even his politics were not unappreciated and did not cause him to forfeit the respect of the villagers, the while he was at loggerheads with their landlord. When the election had passed and the votes had been counted, it was found that

¹ Sterne to John Blake, 5 July 1758, printed by Percy Fitzgerald, *Life of Sterne*, London 1896, i, p. 88; cf. *Poll Book*, Ward's ed., p. 106b.

² Id., p. 166a.

³ Id., p. 143a.

⁴ W. L. Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-2.

⁵ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Letters*, p. 6. ⁶ *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 231.

⁷ Cf. Sterne's interesting reply to the Archbishop's *questionnaire* of 1743, published by Canon S. L. Ollard in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 Mar. 1926, p. 217.

the freeholders of Sutton had been influenced equally by the temporal power of Harland and the spiritual authority of Sterne. Of the eighteen who came to York Castle, nine gave their votes to George Fox, and nine to their vicar's own candidate.¹

With the major tracks of Sterne's coming history being thus laid by the industry of Whigs and Tories, with the two parties likely to break forth in actual riot, York suddenly found itself at the eve of the election. Throughout the past four months the county had been the scene of an intensive campaign, which the city was now to see concluded. Yorkshire was in readiness to witness the whole result of its hopes and fears. All through the autumn and early winter it had spent itself in celebration and electioneering. In most of the large towns, accompanied by the ringing of bells, the rolling of drums, and the blare of local music, the candidates had appeared in order to solicit votes.² There had been much shouting and applause, much making of entertainment, and no doubt much purchasing of promises. Seats of the powerful had been given over to receptions at which old wines or punch went plentifully round. Gentlemen had raised glasses to the King, to the Church, to the present happy Establishment, and to the political chieftains of the shire. At York the journals had cried up one candidate and shouted down the other. They had begun with high politics and ended with

¹ *Poll Book*, Ward's ed., pp. 143-4a, 148b.

² Owing to a lack of documents relating to the election it has been necessary to construct this description of the events which occurred up to, and through, the polling in the yard of York Castle from accounts of the elections of 1734 and 1807. Since customs did not change, since the election was an important one, it is presumed that the description is in general accurate.

low calumny. Their printers and authors alike had carried through their task and rested expectantly. Christopher Oldfield, postmaster and proprietor of the *George*, having been authorized to lay a wager from 'Ten Pounds to ONE THOUSAND',¹ was being whipped in the *Courant*. There had been dinners, and meetings, and drinking-bouts. Scandalous lies concerning the candidates had entered the heads of honest folk. Denials and denunciations had followed in their path. A clergyman at Leeds had thrice denied himself. A canon of York had sacrificed his life on behalf of his party, and another had been straightway popped into his vacant benefice. A great storm had descended upon the city and thickened the confusion of politicians.

On 11 January affairs were no better. While cold winds howled down from the Minster towers, and the river, flooded with rains and snow, still threatened to swallow up Ouse bridge,² while from far in the north were arriving cartloads of warm brandy, cured hams, and other meats and provisions for the pleasure of electors,³ Cholmley Turner, come from Kirkleatham, made a triumphal entry into the city. On the great north road that leads from Clifton outside the city walls he was met by a company of gentlemen, mounted on horseback, who led him down to the grey barbican of Bootham Bar and into the city itself. Citizens and supporters thronged the narrow streets.

¹ *York Gazetteer*, Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 4].

² Besides Beckwith's note we have the testimony of a correspondent of Godfrey Wentworth. 'It is said Mr. Turner comes to town this evening. Mr. Fox comes to-morrow evening attended by the Craven voters. It is very bad weather for an election.' Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, London 1903, ii, p. 420. ³ Expressly forbidden by Stat., 4 Will. III, c. iv.

Bearing yellow cockades and party placards,¹ they broke their way through the principal thoroughfares and conducted their candidate 'with all possible Demonstrations of Joy' to his lodgings in Castlegate. There before the imposing mansion of Samuel Waud,² themselves almost under the shadow of Clifford's Tower and within a stone's throw of the Castle Yard, they left him. They left him to disperse throughout the city, to be drinking abundant free ale in his honour, and to be singing party songs from the coffee-houses.

On the morrow, with the arrival of George Fox, who took up his residence with the Lord Mayor in Mint Yard,³ the fracas renewed itself. Voters from Craven and elsewhere crowded beside him on the highroad and entered the city to increase the noise and commotion. Always in the vision of loyal freeholders was that seat in Parliament and, perhaps as well, that extra cup of free ale, known by the name of Yorkshire stingo. The Tories were confident of success; and if their opponents, in doubting such confidence, cracked a few of their heads, there were yet left a few hours in which to meditate on pain.

The next day the procession of freeholders from all parts of Yorkshire threaded its way to poll at the Castle Yard. For the occasion all tolls were set aside on the roads in order to let the voters proceed at the least expense. There came by the hundreds during this day and the seven days that followed a train of coaches, berlins, landaus, calashes, chairs, and chariots, men on foot, on horseback, and in

¹ Thomas Lashley, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-51.

² *York Courant*, Numb. 848, Tuesday, 12 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

³ *Ibid.*



OUSE BRIDGE AND ST. WILLIAM'S CHAPEL

carts.¹ Freeholders wound their way to the court of York Castle, where they found the weary-looking buildings that faced upon it pushed back almost out of sight by the polling booths that were erected in the square. Those who had reached the place on the morning of the commencement of the election would have witnessed the opening of the County Court at the hustings there before them, and heard called the names of the candidates and of those who proposed them. They would have seen the High Sheriff, Sir Lionel Pilkington, preside in person, and the crowd of assessors whose office it was to determine disputed votes. Individually they would have presented themselves at one of the numerous booths to give their vote. These booths were apportioned to the wapentakes of the shire and were set apart for those whose holdings lay within the boundary of these districts.² Sterne, sallow and thin, had tendered his vote at the booth for the wapentake of Bulmer, since within it lay his lands at Huby and his dwelling at Sutton. Beside each booth the Sheriff had planted a deputy who demanded an oath of each voter. He must swear, or, if a Quaker, must affirm, that he had received no money for his vote, nor any office, nor reward, and must declare again upon oath that he had not before voted in the election.³ If approved by the deputy and passed by the Cheque Clerks and Agents whom Turner and Fox had ordered to attend every booth to eliminate

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 848, Tuesday, 12 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

² *County of York. Poll for Knights of the Shire, 1807*, York 1807, pp. x-xi. This custom may have been prevalent before 18 Geo. II, xviii, 7, when it became a law. By Stat., 10 Anne, c. xxiii, 6, Yorkshire was permitted to use 'seven convenient tables, or places for taking the poll.'

³ 10 Anne, c. xxiii, 8, 4.

doubtful voters,¹ if passed by these, the elector, whether Sterne or John Doe, was allowed to poll. If he aroused suspicions, he was led by a messenger to the bench of assessors for examination. If he was then found guilty of perjury, he must stand with his ears nailed to the pillory or be confined or be transported to the colonies for seven years.²

Day by day, after the opening of these booths, the electors came and passed. In 1734 their number had exceeded that of any previous election and now it eclipsed by almost four hundred the number assembled at that memorable polling. In all above fifteen thousand men were taking the oaths and giving their votes.³ So close was the contest that when on the nineteenth, after five days of polling, Cæsar Ward announced⁴ that Turner led by over seven hundred votes, none could in truth foretell the issue. Ward himself was far from crestfallen, notwithstanding the failure of Fox thus far to gain the lead. Ward boosted his worthy cause and was assured his candidate would gain the seat in Parliament, since he was 'determined to stand it to the last Man'. There was nothing so good as courage and hope. Two days later, on the twenty-first, the contest was decided.⁵ Amid cheers and joyous clamour, amid broken heads and scratched faces, the light of bonfires and the pealing of church bells, Cholmley Turner was declared elected Knight of the Shire. Sir Lyonel

¹ *Poll for Knights of the Shire, 1807*, p. xi.

² By Statutes, 5 Eliz. c. ix; 7 and 8 Will. III, c. xxv; 2 Geo. II, c. xxv, 2.

³ *York Courant*, Numb. 850, Tuesday, 26 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

⁴ *Id.*, Numb. 849, Tuesday, 19 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

⁵ *Id.*, Numb. 850, Tuesday, 26 Jan. 1741-2 [p. 3].

Pilkington had delivered his proclamation. The mob paid their respects. For the last time in his life Turner was chaired through the streets of York.¹ Victor by near a thousand votes he looked down upon a delighted company that had carried him thus from the days of his youth. Yorkshire had seen the greatest election within the memory of man. The Whigs had captured the honours and for one day feasted their new representative. But the old Turner was not changed by success. There was always for him that mausoleum in the north. Quietly then on Saturday he slipped away leaving the city to discussion, in order to seek rest in the seclusion of Kirkleatham.²

Turner reappears for the last time some three years after the great election. He has furbished his regimentals, and like my uncle Toby plays at war upon a bowling-green. It is the thirtieth of October 1745, and England celebrates the King's birthday with unusual fervour, since the rebels in Scotland are threatening the safety of the nation. Yorkshire is in the process of panic and Cholmley Turner marches up and down in its defence. Several pieces of canon and the church bells salute his departure from Kirkleatham at the head of a troop of horse and a company of foot, the hundred men all armed, clothed, and disciplined at his own expense. He marches to Guisborough where he is joined by a few loyal gentlemen and their tenants. The army draws up in an adjacent plain, pushes forward to the town, performing the platoon, and street firings, and volleys. There is much applause. The old politician drinks a gallon of toasts to the King, to that veritable Squire Sullen, the Prince of Wales, and to the damnation of the

¹ Lashley, *op. cit.*, pp. 46 ff. ² *York Courant*, Numb. 850 [p. 3].

Pretender. An ox, roasted whole, and hogsheads of ale he divides among the populace. There are bonfires, bells, illuminations, a ball for the ladies, and all other expressions of joy.¹ Every one believes the parade has saved the world. Cholmley Turner takes off the regimentals and goes to bed,—‘Or facing a platoon?’ cried *Trim*, presenting his stick like a firelock.—Or when he marches up the glaxis? cried my uncle *Toby*, looking warm, and setting his foot upon his stool.—’²

In the weeks that followed the election, while York was once more settling down to the monotony of its existence, Sterne had occasion to ruminate upon several matters which concerned him closely. For ten months he had been responsible for the Whig party in so far as its defence and praise in York papers was necessary. The sale of the *York Gazetteer* at Barnsley, Scarborough, Hull, and Kirby-moorside had affected the distribution of his writings, which, in turn, had influenced the decision of freeholders. Indeed so largely had he contributed to the success of his party, and to the election of Turner in this crucial time, that he may reasonably have regarded himself a benefactor to the ministerial party. As such he could feel himself entitled to some preferment. In January he had been presented to the prebend of North Newbald but, however agreeable that honour had been, he was aware it represented no great advance beyond the stall he had relinquished and was, indeed, nothing more than a palliative. That he was conscious of the neglect and ingratitude of the Whigs seems evident, for he revealed his disappoint-

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 1047, Tuesday, 5 Nov. 1745 [p. 3].

² *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, ii, Bk. IV, chap. xviii, p. 63.

ment in a letter he had occasion shortly to publish. It may have been that the Whigs were powerless to acknowledge his service, for the catastrophe of 3 February, when Walpole and his party tumbled out of their offices, deprived them of influence and absorbed their attention. Certain, however, it is that Sterne's political ardour was diminished by a glimpse of the rejoicings at York over Walpole's resignation.¹ Too plainly he perceived that his party was now obscured by the Tories and that he could not butter his own bread until he saw what party would eventually keep a majority. Accordingly during the early weeks of March he followed the example of the Grand Patron, and resigned from the staff of the *Gazetteer*. What his uncle thought of the act is untold; what the Tories thought they published in the *Courant* without delay.²

L—y's *Reasons for writing no more Gazetteers*.

Presuming that to wear the Lawn,
 I had a just Pretence,
 I've scribbled now for one whole Year,
 To baffle Common Sense.
 I've taken Pains by Logick Rules,
 To prove myself an Ass;
 Not dreaming what a wond'rous Change
 Is like to come to pass.
 But now my Pen I've splinter'd quite,
 And thrown away my Ink,
 For 'till I see which Side will win,
 I'll neither write nor think.

Sterne kept more strictly to his word than the rhymester of these facile verses imagined. By the end of July he

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 852, Tuesday, 9 Feb. 1741-2 [p. 2].

² *Id.*, Numb. 858, Tuesday, 23 Mar. 1741-2 [p. 2].

knew what was what at York and acted accordingly. In the first week of the month Edward Thompson, the Whig member for the city, left empty by his death a seat in Parliament. To the nomination of George Fox, who was straightway proposed, no objection could possibly be made, all opposition being for the moment crushed. No votes were bought, no riots were quelled. On the twenty-first, two weeks following Thompson's death, Fox was unanimously elected and returned to Parliament. 'The Bells rung the whole Day, and in the Evening Mr. Fox gave a Ball at the Assembly Rooms, at which (all the Citizens in general, without Distinction of Party, being invited) there was the greatest Appearance ever known upon such an Occasion.'¹ Sterne, one may be sure, was present, for he had already decided upon his next step. Two days after the ball he published the following letter.

To the Printer of the YORK COURANT ²

SIR,

I find by some late Preferments, that it may not be improper to change Sides; therefore I beg the Favour of you to inform the Publick, that I sincerely beg Pardon for the abusive Gazetteers I wrote during the late contested Election for the County of York, and that I heartily wish Mr. Fox Joy of his Election for the City.

*Tempora Mutantur, & nos mutemur in illis.*³

I am, Sir, your Penitent Friend and Servant.

L. S.

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 876, Tuesday, 27 July 1742 [p. 3].

² *Ibid.*

³ Originally, *mutamur in illis*. A saying of Lothair I by Matthew Borbonius in *Delitiæ Poetarum Germanorum*, Francofurti 1612, i, p. 685.

VI

ONE may easily imagine the rage of Jaques Sterne on the day when he read this letter. He had befriended Sterne upon his graduation by procuring for him the curacy of Catton, the vicarage of Sutton, and the prebend of Givendale. He had persuaded him to enter politics. By his labours he had expected to gain still greater preferment and wealth. The young nephew had betrayed the Whig cause and, worst of all, had forsaken him the moment the Tories had overthrown the Whigs. Possibly he had been keen enough to sense Sterne's ultimate apology some weeks before, when he learned of his resignation from the *Gazetteer*, and was in some way prepared to meet the disgrace. But since he was a man as lacking in humour as his nephew was prodigal of it, he ran headlong into the obvious and quarrelled. He was not one to perceive the tone of disappointment, which every line of the letter revealed, and dwelt solely upon his nephew's knavish trick of desertion. To him the words 'abusive Gazetteers', 'Penitent Friend and Servant' were perfect gall. For Laurence to declare himself a friend of the objectionable printer of the *Courant* was alone sufficient cause to withdraw patronage from the Prebendary. For Sterne to confess himself the servant of Ward was an insult beyond forgiveness. The Precentor, whose wife had died in January,¹ was doubtless much

¹ Dr. Sterne married Catherine, daughter of Sir John Goodrick, of Ribston, 12 Jan. 1719-20. She died at the age of sixty-two, 26 Jan. 1741-2, one week following the election of Cholmley Turner (*Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, Leeds 1911, xxi, J. W. Clay, *The Sterne Family*, p. 99). Cæsar Ward wrote, 'Last Tuesday died Mrs. Sterne, Wife of

grieved and enraged by this additional blow. 'He quarrelled with me afterwards,' was Sterne's brief commentary, 'because I would not write paragraphs in the newspapers—though he was a party-man, I was not, and detested such dirty work: thinking it beneath me'.¹ Had Sterne not written the letter that brought disgrace upon his uncle, he might never have suffered the quarrel with the Precentor, a quarrel which, after the first break in July of this year, continued intermittently until 1747, when it broke forth into open and bitter violence. For five years Sterne appears to have borne the persecutions of his uncle, and at one time so far buried the affair that he joined with him in his attack upon Dr. Burton.² The doctor, however, who neither forgot nor forgave the manner in which his nephew had gone over to the Tories, at last found an opportunity to destroy the ingrate. Later events, as well as phrases in Sterne's own letter to him, reveal plainly the fact that the quarrel had begun when Sterne changed sides.

The fracas between the Sternes is familiar to all readers of the humorist and requires only a brief summary. Following Dr. Sterne's objection to his nephew's taking the turn of several of his friends, who gave him the chance of preaching for them in the Minster in order that he might add to his income, following his objection in the fall of 1750, Sterne had occasion, the next spring, of addressing the long letter to his uncle, which amounts almost to an autobiography of the Reverend Dr. Sterne, Precentor of the Cathedral, a Lady remarkable for her Piety, Meekness, Charity, and every Qualification that can adorn her Sex; which has render'd her Death regretted by all who had the Pleasure of her Acquaintance.' *York Courant*, Numb. 851, Tuesday, 2 Feb. 1741-2 [p. 3]. Sterne's sister, Catherine, was doubtless named after her.

¹ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Letters*, p. 6.

² Cf. p. 18.

graphy, and which shows the change that had come over the quarrel. He reminded the Precentor that in 1731 or 1732, his mother, following the death of her husband in the West Indies, had come to England to seek out her pension. She had made application for assistance to Dr. Sterne, who had never interested himself in the misery of his brother's family, and had received from him not even the favour of an interview, since he had not suffered her to come to York.¹ Mrs. Sterne had withdrawn to Ireland, where she remained until she heard that her son, in March 1741, had married a woman reported to be an heiress.² This agreeable news had 'hastened her over to England'³ in the expectation of receiving support from her now affluent son. Her visit had probably occurred in the summer of that year. Sterne, anxious to disabuse his mother of her fancy, had forsaken his politics for a few days and journeyed to Liverpool, where he met both his mother and sister and succeeded in establishing them at Chester. Here for the next five or six years they managed to live, owing to small sums of money they pried away from the indigent Vicar of Sutton. They attempted more than once to disturb his peace but did not accomplish their intentions until December 1747, when Mrs. Sterne came to York, as Sterne told the Precentor, 'recommended to Your Compassion with a Complaint against *Me*', whereas upon her previous journey to Jaques sixteen years before, she 'had nothing to move You but the *real* Distress of her Condi-

¹ *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 95.

² Elizabeth Lumley's fortune was probably no more than thirty or forty pounds a year; cf. *Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. E. J. Climensson, London 1906, i, pp. 85, 230.

³ *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 96.

tion'.¹ Upon her second visit in 1747 Mrs. Sterne had found a ready ally in her brother-in-law, who joined with her against Laurence by spreading the report that the Vicar could leave his mother to shift for herself. Dr. Sterne appears later even to have lodged Mrs. Sterne in the Ousebridge prison at York in order to wholly destroy his nephew's reputation.² The year was 1751.³ Eight years later Dr. Sterne was a corpse in the churchyard of Rise. While a dignitary his income had been something over £900.⁴ Two years before his death he had sold his mansion in the Minster Yard for £2,000.⁵ The disposal of these riches was a harsh testimonial of the break between him and his nephew that had begun when Sterne

¹ *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 95.

² Two of Sterne's contemporaries mention this scandal; cf. John Croft in *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 230; Rev. Daniel Watson, of Leake, Yorks., to George Whatley, 10 Jan. 1776, *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, January 1808, iii, p. 12.

³ As if to spite his nephew, Dr. Sterne in the spring of 1750 neglected Sterne when he presented a vicar to the living of Aldborough which was in his gift. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,720. f. 333, Andrew Wilkinson to Duke of Newcastle, 18 May 1750.

⁴ Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,730, ff. 285-7. Jaques Sterne to Duke of Newcastle, 24 Nov. 1752. Quoted by Cross, *Life*, i, pp. 81-2.

⁵ Mrs. Edwin Gray, *Papers and Diaries of a York Family 1764-1839*, London 1927, p. 7. Mrs. Gray (pp. 6-7) quotes from a letter written by William Gray in 1840. 'The house I live in was Dr. Sterne's, who in 1757 sold off to Dr. Topham the part now enjoyed by Dr. Simpson. . . . Now concerning Dr. Sterne for whose exemplary conduct you say nothing can be said, he was not only extravagant but vicious; he had, as a servant I suppose, a married woman, with whom he lived immorally. Mrs. Mason told me the following story of him: At that day a register was kept of the attendance of the Minster Choir, Vicars, etc. Mr. Warneford was a very good man but humourist, with a grand voice and manner. On Saturday's call Dr. Sterne, the Precentor, turned severely upon Warneford who had been twice absent that week: "What account have you to give of this neglect?" said Dr. Sterne. "Why, Mr. Precentor, I went to Acomb where my wife was very ill, my own wife, Mr. Precentor."'

addressed the printer of the *Courant*. He never forgave Laurence. Jaques Sterne had written:—‘ I give all real and personal estate after debts and funeral expenses are paid to Sarah Benson, now living with me . . . and make her sole executrix.’¹

Thus, by his letter to Ward, which brought to conclusion a year’s industry in a period once termed by his biographer ‘ the obscurest phase of Sterne’s life after he reached man’s estate ’,² Sterne founded the cause of a quarrel that led him with its pains and anger to the writing of a famous passage in *Tristram Shandy*. In 1741 Sterne had remained close to York and never at all, as has been thought, travelled ‘ through *Denmark* with Mr. Noddy’s eldest son, whom, in the year 1741, I accompanied as governor, riding along with him at a prodigious rate thro’ most parts of *Europe* ’.³ He had passed through a year of abusive parleying and by his winding up of that controversy had given Dr. Sterne a weapon. The persecutions had begun after July 1742,⁴ when he was twenty-eight

¹ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, Leeds 1911, xxi, p. 99. The will, proved 13 June 1759, is at the Registry, York.

² Cross, op. cit., i, p. 65.

³ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xi, p. 25. Mr. Noddy’s eldest son is thought to have been the young Charles Gordon, Earl of Aboyne (? 1726–95) whose chaplain Sterne, in 1744, was described to be (Brit. Mus., Add. Charters 16,162). The Earl of Aboyne’s daughter married William Beckford, of Fonthill, the author of *Vathek*. To connect Noddy with the Earl is far-fetched in the face of the present disclosure; cf. Cross, op. cit., i, pp. 52–3 n.; *Notes and Queries*, August 1913, 11th Series, viii, p. 166.

⁴ In his letter to Dr. Sterne (5 April 1751) Laurence referred to ‘ ten Years unwearied Persecution ’ he had received from his uncle. This statement would date the opening of the quarrel in 1741. As such is not the case, Sterne doubtless meant the year 1742; cf. *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 107.

years of age. Years later, one remembers that he described the quarrel in his novel, and that he gave all sympathy to himself. *Eugenius* had urged *Yorick* to be discreet, but had been answered by evasion. 'Trust me,—trust me, *Yorick*,' he had cried, '*when to gratify a private appetite, it is once resolved upon, that an innocent and helpless creature shall be sacrificed, 'tis an easy matter to pick up sticks enow from any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with.*'¹ *Yorick* had taken no heed. He had apologized to *Cæsar Ward*. He was unguarded—

a grand confederacy, with * * * * * and * * * * * at the head of it, was form'd before the first prediction of it.—The whole plan of the attack, just as *Eugenius* had foreboded, was put in execution all at once,—with so little mercy on the side of the allies,—and so little suspicion in *Yorick*, of what was carrying on against him,—that when he thought, good easy man! full surely preferment was o'er-ripening,—they had smote his root, and then he fell, as many a man had fallen before him.²

Jaques had smelt a fault in his nephew's estrangement from his mother. He had seized the opportunity by giving it out she was starving because of her son's neglect. *Yorick's* good name was ruined. He failed of preferment, possibly one of those 'late Preferments' to which he had made sorry allusion in his letter to *Ward*, he failed of honour, and died of a broken heart. '*Eugenius* was convinced . . . that the heart of his friend was broke; he squeez'd his hand,—and then walked softly out of the room, weeping as he walk'd. *Yorick* followed *Eugenius*

¹ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xii, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*

with his eyes to the door,—he then closed them,—and never opened them more'.¹

The tone of self-pity, which is manifest in this passage from *Tristram Shandy* as well as in the concluding lines of the letter to his uncle,² was so characteristic a side of Sterne's nature that it is therefore not quite justifiable. Throughout his life he never saw himself at fault nor in any light but that of pitiful innocence. The effect of this egotistical behaviour is to give to many of Sterne's defences a touch of farce. In the present instance he certainly had many grievances from which to complain, but he failed in great part not only to realize how his uncle must have looked upon his treachery but to value the several benefits, although tardily bestowed, which had come to him as the result of his support of Cholmley Turner. By means of his writings he had grown from an insignificant country parson to a man of considerable moment in the diocese. In March 1744 he had been admitted and instituted by Dean Osbaldeston, following a special dispensation from Lambeth, to the vicarage of Stillington, which he held with his living at Sutton.³ Three years later he had given the annual sermon at St. Michael le Belfrey on behalf of the Charity School, and in midsummer 1750 had preached before the Assize Judges in the Minster. He had visibly risen in the opinion of his fellows during these years; yet he complained of failure. He seems even to have forgotten the honour which came to him two years after his withdrawal from the *Gazetteer*,

¹ *Works, Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xii, p. 33.

² Cf. *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, p. 107.

³ The dispensation was dated 3 Mar. 1743-4 (Brit. Mus., Add. Charters 16,162). Sterne was admitted ten days later; *id.*, 16,164.

and which, although it did not greatly add to his pocket, suggests that he ranked among the prominent clergy of York. He overlooked, as his biographers have done, the occasion when he was chosen to celebrate the installation of a new Archbishop in the see of York.

When, following the death of Lancelot Blackburne in 1743, Thomas Herring, preacher at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was appointed to the archbishopric of York, the city commenced a brief season of festivity in order to welcome him. On Wednesday, 8 June, the new Archbishop arrived at his palace of Bishopthorpe, and on Friday received the Sword Bearer, who was sent by order of the Lord Mayor, with the usual gift of plate from the city.

And on Saturday, being the Day of his Majesty's happy Accession to the Crown, who on that Day enter'd the 17th Year of his Reign, his Grace, accompanied by the Right Rev. Dr. Mawson, Lord Bishop of Chichester, went to the Cathedral, where a Sermon suitable to the Occasion was preach'd by the Rev. Mr. Sterne, one of the Prebendaries.¹

As might be expected, Sterne in the ensuing years shunned politics. He finally described them as 'dirty work'. Doubtless the deft satires of 'J. S.', which he had heard sung as he passed the open windows of a coffee-house, had brought fully to his mind the inevitable scurrility of his profession and turned him from the low drudgery of writing weekly essays and notices for the *York Gazetteer*. He came to agree with Burke that 'it is of no consequence what the principles of any party, or what their pretensions are; the spirit which actuates all parties is the same, the spirit of ambition, self-interest, of oppres-

¹ *York Courant*, Numb. 922, Tuesday, 14 June 1743 [p. 3].

sion, and treachery'.¹ He remembered the niggardly appreciation of his support which Turner and the Whigs offered him, but he did not forget the pleasure he had found in the quarrels of faction, a sport he never failed to enjoy. With his temporary removal to the Tory party, however, he had deprived himself of further political activity and had gained only the hatred of his uncle. In 1747 when Turner, because of his age and gout, refused the nomination of the Whigs to stand again for Parliament,² and in 1753 when the Whigs had met at York to nominate Lord Downe and Sir Conyers D'Arcy as candidates to represent the shire, Sterne, although his uncle was active, seems to have taken no part.³ At least he was not mentioned by Wilkinson as among those present at the meeting at York, 16 July 1753, when he informed Newcastle concerning his party. Five years later Sterne was farther removed from politics than ever before, and refused to join with the Whigs in their turbulent denunciation of Dr. Burton and his intrigues. In December 1758, when York was the scene of a riotous election, he was writing to his friend, John Blake, from his welcome retirement at Sutton: — 'I send my Amen to enquire after You, never yet having been able upon any Acc^t. to get to York, the great confusion of the Election, w^{ch} I hate as much as my friend Taylor does, kept me here during that Period'.⁴ Had Sterne gone

¹ *Works of Edmund Burke*, London 1801, i, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, p. 57.

² Cf. Turner's two letters to Newcastle and Christopher Oldfield, 13 June, 6 July, 1747. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,711, f. 338, 35,589, f. 284.

³ Cf. Brit. Mus., Add. MSS. 32,732, f. 316.

⁴ The text from MS. in the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Gabriel, California. 'Sinful Amen' was Sterne's parish clerk; cf. *Works*, New York 1904, *Letters*, i, pp. 115, 118.

to York he might have enjoyed the opportunity to malign John Burton who brought upon himself the anger and ridicule of the Whigs, but he remained at Sutton, listening to reports of the political fray. He had cause to be interested and to request Blake to send him copies of the *York Courant*, because George Fox was implicated in the election, because Burton made an ass of himself, and because he was himself within a year of caricaturing the physician as Dr. Slop.

The contest of 1758 may bear indirectly upon Sterne's opinion of Dr. Burton at that important time. The little pedant during the summer had laid down his forceps and squirt in order to publish the first volume of his great work on Yorkshire. In a mighty folio that now appears so helpless before the little volume of *Tristram Shandy*, which stung its author and unintentionally gave him fame, in a great folio *Monasticon Eboracense* issued forth into the world by means of Burton's literary midwifery, 22 August 1758.¹ The subscribers, among whom appeared the entire Fox family of Bramham, were glorious and were only surpassed in point of magnificence by the title-page, which boasted that the reader would find the book 'adorned with Copper-Plates . . . of Churches, Abbies, Ruins, &c, and other Curious Things worthy of Observation'. A second volume was promised. Yet upon looking into it, the reader found only a map or two and never at all saw the second great volume.² Both were fantasies of an

¹ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, London 1873, ii, Robert Davies, *A Memoir of John Burton*, p. 426.

² Sterne may have remembered this misfortune in *Tristram Shandy* (*Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xiii, p. 38): 'But I must here, once for all, inform you, that all this will be more

indigent doctor. Burton, however, was not abashed at the absurd absence of the vaunted plates. He looked upon the world as indebted to him and soon had occasion to test his new importance. Within a month of the publication of his work the Whig member for York, Sir John Armitage, of Kirklees, had died. It was the intention of the Whigs to fill the vacancy created by his death by quietly electing William Thornton, of Cattal, whom they had nominated. Plans were in readiness to avoid a contest. Even among the Tories there was no dissent, until of a sudden Dr. Burton and Edward Wallis, a medical practitioner, who was one of the sheriffs that year, trumped up an exaggerated enthusiasm to send to Parliament Robert Fox-Lane, whose father, George Fox, was the sitting member for York.¹ Towards the end of November the Lord Mayor had gone so far in an effort to preserve the peace as to persuade Fox-Lane to withdraw on condition that Thornton at the next general election would oppose neither George Fox nor himself. All would have gone well; but Lane had met Burton and finally sent him to Cæsar Ward's printing office with the announcement that he would stand.² A contest was now unavoidable, and Burton was the target for the local satirists. He was described as a self-important physician, who associated with 'a Brewer a *Wine-Merchant*, a *Grocer* and . . . an *Apothecary*'. One handbill, referring to his disgrace in 1745, praised him,

exactly delineated and explain'd in a map, now in the hands of the engraver, which, with many other pieces and developments to this work, will be added to the end of the twentieth volume.'

¹ *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, ii, pp. 428-9.

² Brit. Mus. $\frac{816. m. 4}{83}$, a handbill dated 27 Nov. 1758.

since he had 'remarkably distinguish'd himself for his Loyalty and Zeal in behalf of his Majesty King George and the Protestant Establishment during the last Rebellion'.¹ He was called Hippocrates Obstetricus, the patron of butchers and bakers whose votes he had influenced, and was addressed along with 'doughty Chiefs, great Props of Trade' in a poetic squib.² 'Riots and Outrages'³ occurred before the election which opened on the first of December. Men armed with clubs waited at the booths to prevent voting during the week. On the seventh the polling ceased.⁴ Burton's cause was exploded. William Thornton was declared elected, and Burton was left to ponder upon the sweets of being author or demagogue. He had succeeded only in making himself ridiculous. He had knocked at Sterne's door and demanded admittance to the pages of *Tristram Shandy*.

Sterne's attitude towards politics had now wholly changed. From the bitterness he knew in 1742 he had slowly turned to a realization of the absurdity of such affairs, and was able with a mellowness built of experience to ridicule county politics. In 1759 he was laughing in the *Political Romance* at the very meetings he had once attended. Not quite a deserter from the Whigs, he mocked the Political Club that discussed the true significance of the *Romance*. The Club was Whig in sentiment, for it bewailed the Partition Treaties of William's reign, treaties

¹ Brit. Mus. $\frac{816. m. 4.}{81}$

² Brit. Mus. 1875. b. 35 (4).

³ *Collection of Hand-bills and Songs relating to York 1745-1787*, fol. 39^v. York Minster Library, Hailstone, FF.

⁴ Cf. *London Evening Post*, December 1758, Numbs. 4851-2.

negotiated by the Tories, which had 'laid the Foundation of all the Disturbances and Sorrows we feel and lament at this very Hour'.¹ He described the interpretation given by the quick-sighted president of the Club, he set forth the weighty and confuting theories of other members. He seemed almost to remember Jaques Sterne showing zeal for liberty and all honest things. That same year he invented Mr. Shandy, who was 'wise also in political reasoning', and was writing a delectable parody of political theories. Mr. Shandy, he declared, resented his wife's insistence in lying-in at London, for such journeys to the capital shifted the political balance and bid fair to wreck the kingdom.

'Why are there so few palaces and gentlemen's seats,' he would ask, with some emotion, as he walked across the room, 'throughout so many delicious provinces in *France*? Whence is it that the few remaining *Chateaus* amongst them are so dismantled,—so unfurnished, and in so ruinous and desolate a condition?—Because, Sir,' (he would say) 'in that kingdom no man has any country-interest to support;—the little interest of any kind, which any man has any where in it, is concentrated in the court, and the looks of the Grand Monarch; by the sunshine of whose countenance, or the clouds which pass across it, every *French* man lives or dies.'²

Mr. Shandy's theories make inimitable nonsense; they are, indeed, an amusing burlesque of those letters once written to 'J. S.'. The travesty suggests Sterne's final opinion of his political career. He was apparently a different man from him that wrote for the *Gazetteer*. But he did not quite forget the clash in 1741, for among the books from

¹ Cross, *op. cit.*, i, p. 167.

² *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xviii, pp. 51-2.

his library which were auctioned five months after his death there was one that may have belonged to him—
'York County Poll, in Boards. 8 vo. 1742'.¹

If the Poll Book was really Sterne's own copy of Ward's edition, it remained for him a memento of his political career and of his disappointment, at once the symbol of his success and failure. Memories which he may have had of the elections of 1741 and 1742 surrounded the small volume. They were not, however, bitter memories, for he had not allowed his sense of Cholmley Turner's ingratitude to impair the friendship he found with the politician's family. Had he permitted himself to experience the pleasure of indignation, he would not have been that frequent guest at Kirkleatham whom in later years he came to be. With Turner, after he had addressed his apologies to Ward and George Fox, he does not appear to have been upon an intimate footing, since no record survives of their continued relations; but it is likely that the separation between them was rather the result of their different temperaments and ages than of any feeling of hostility. When Turner died in 1757, Sterne had certainly not withdrawn himself from the society at Kirkleatham, since he counted

¹ A/Catalogue/of a Curious and Valuable/ Collection of Books, / Among which are included/ The Entire Library/ Of the late Reverend and Learned/ Laurence Sterne, A.M./ *Prebendary of York*, &c. &c./ . . . Which will begin to be sold *exceeding cheap* (the Prices printed in the Catalogue) on *Tuesday, August 23*, 1768.

By J. Todd and H. Sotheran. 4^o, pp. [i, ii]–94. Signatures A–M3 (12 sheets, 4 leaves). Title-page separate.

This rare catalogue was (1926) in the possession of the late Mr. James Tregaskis, of London. Among the volumes for sale was probably Sterne's copy of *Tristram Shandy* (9 vols., 'handsomely bound 1760 etc. 12^{mo}., p. 61') which was offered at £1/5/0. Sterne's copy of the *Emile* of J.-J. Rousseau is in my possession.

among his friends the young heir who succeeded to the estates of his uncle. Charles Turner, who was then in his twenty-seventh year, was the son of Turner's brother William and enjoyed the estates of his uncle at this time, although they did not pass to him until his father's death in 1774.¹ He was fond of travel,² and was regarded by Arthur Young as one of the leading authorities on farming in his day.³ Active in politics,⁴ he found time to entertain Sterne more than once. He possessed a manuscript of Book IV of *Tristram Shandy*,⁵ and humoured its author during the last summer of Sterne's life by listening to his account of Mrs. Draper. 'Dining & feasting all day at Mr Turner's,' Sterne wrote to his Bramine,⁶ '—his Lady, a fine Woman herself,⁷ in love wth your Picture—O my dear Lady cried I, did you but know the Original—but what is she to you, Tristram?—nothing; but that I am in Love with her—et ceetera—— said she.' Friendship is

¹ John Walker Ord, *The History of Cleveland*, London 1846, p. 369; William Smith, *Old Yorkshire*, London 1866, p. 164; J. and J. W. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Cambridge 1927, Pt. I, to 1751, iv, p. 273.

² *Seven Letters Written by Sterne and His Friends*, ed. W. Durrant Cooper, London 1844, p. 4.

³ Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, 2nd ed., London 1771, ii, pp. 104, 106.

⁴ Charles Turner was a Sheriff of York from 1756 to 1760, and a member for the city from 1756 until his death, 26 Oct. 1783; cf. G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Baronetage*, Exeter 1906, v, p. 218.

⁵ W. Durrant Cooper, who saw the manuscript, thought it contained 'some additions by Sterne'. *Notes and Queries*, January 1859, 2nd Ser., vii, p. 15. Repeated inquiries at Kirkleatham have proved futile.

⁶ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *A Sentimental Journey &c.*, *Journal to Eliza*, 14 July 1767, p. 248.

⁷ Elizabeth, daughter of William Wombwell, of Wombwell, Yorks. She died 16 June 1768; cf. *York Courant*, Numb. 2225, Tuesday, 21 June 1768 [p. 2].

patent in these lines. The unrewarded defence of Cholmley Turner had brought to Sterne, if not mighty preferences, at least the right to claim sympathy for his sick body and wilting amour from the Turners of Kirkleatham. In giving this sympathy they atoned for previous neglect, for Mr. Yorick, while writing one of the gayest of books, was a tragic enough man, dying of tuberculosis and crying for a little kindness.

VII

VIEWED in its broader aspect, the political career of Sterne, which witnessed his first published writings, revealed him in three separate ways. It threw light upon his abilities as a political writer and controversialist, upon his literary taste, and lastly and chiefly upon his character.

In a better sense than he intimated when describing Mr. Walter Shandy, Sterne was gifted to reason intelligently in the realm of politics. By undertaking the work of writing articles for the *York Gazetteer* at the age of twenty-seven, and at a time when the victory of the Whigs was anything but an immaterial necessity, Sterne displayed not only courage but a considerable aptitude for the task. Fortunately for him he had been born with an instinct to appreciate the virtues of telling the truth and of making up lies, an instinct which ought to be the equipment of any successful politician. In his articles, apart from the mere invective with which they were copiously laden, he had published undeniable truths by the side of distortions and falsehoods, and eventually succeeded in ousting the opinions of his opponent. Not only did he catch the prevailing Whig sentiments of the day, but he selected with astute judgment those topics he could most profitably discuss. He perceived the weakness of the Tories who wanted a consistent programme, he realized the damage that might derive from the frequent elections his enemies were clamouring for. Nor was he slow in comprehending the intended merits of the Convention and the wisdom of shaping a large standing army to prevent such disgraceful outbreaks as had occurred at Newcastle in 1740.¹ The arguments

¹ In support of a large standing army the *York Gazetteer* urged the weakness of local government. 'This was most notorious at New-

which he derived from his sense of affairs cut sharply to the root of the queries of 'J. S.' and disturbed them greatly, for even then it could be seen as clearly as at a later period that what Sterne censured in the Tories' attitude towards these acts were the very conditions which were apt to endanger the peaceful progress of Great Britain. It is of course apparent that he was not altogether responsible for the stuff of the attacks he published, since his opinions were doubtless influenced by his uncle and Cholmley Turner; but even though this inference may be true, Sterne, by according with those opinions, took an intelligent position among outstanding Whigs. In his more special sphere as journalist he showed himself equally capable to take care of himself. The arguments of 'J. S.' might upon occasion be unanswerable. If so they were, Sterne was not above giving his adversary a direct lie or perverting the sense of his remarks to the extent that they signified the very opposite to their author's intentions. Like Walter Shandy, he had 'a skirmishing, cutting kind of slashing way with him in his disputations, thrusting and ripping, and giving every one a stroke to remember him by in his turn'.² By these means he carried to a victorious conclusion his defence of Turner and his own protection. What may have been the nature of his articles in his own paper, and how far he pushed the arguments and skill he

castle last Year, when a riotous Mob utterly subdued and for some time were in possession of the Town; and one of the Ringleaders had the Insolence to pull the Chief Magistrate out of his Chair to Place himself in it, and impudently declare that He was their Mayor. And it is generally thought the Town wou'd have been laid in Ashes, if a party of Soldiers had not providentially interposed.' Numb. 41, Tuesday, 15 Dec. 1741 [p. 1].

² *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, iii, Bk. VIII, chap. xxxiv, p. 141.

employed against 'J. S.' in the *Courant*, it is impossible to tell. Although it is to be regretted that copies of the *Gazetteer* have largely perished, it is probable that they would have revealed in a less formal manner opinions identical with those of which we have read.

Prophetic of the novels although the articles were in the matter of precision and dexterity, they revealed little of the style which Sterne created in his last years. They displayed none of the musical sweetness of the *Sentimental Journey* and scarce anything of that gay awkwardness of *Tristram Shandy*, which is known as the Shandean manner. Style they undoubtedly possessed, the half-vigorous style of those sermons which were not decorated for the delight of applauding readers, a style which was native in the young Sterne and which could develop into that of *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne had only to chop up his sentences, punctuate them with contrast to achieve his eventual effects. Here and there in the letters upon politics one can readily see the spindle-legged Yorick, armed with a spear, unhorsing blockheads and the worshippers of gravity. Yet in general the style seems taught by a schoolmaster, and, were it not for intimations of Rabelais whom Sterne had enjoyed at Cambridge and the allusion to Don Quixote, it would appear almost stale and profitless. Aside from the early tribute to his 'dearer Cervantes' and the grotesque monster of the Nile, the literary shape of the prose is interesting only as the material out of which grew the immaculate passages of his letters and novels.

In 1741 Laurence Sterne, who extolled the homely virtues because they increased the happiness of man, who bent his efforts to acquaint his fellows with the little oc-

cupations of the kind-hearted and with the sufferings of the poor, Sterne, whose noblest study was mankind, was far removed from the interests by which he is known. With Maria and her service to the Virgin he was not in sympathy. He could never have shed a tear over Le Fever nor my uncle Toby's oath. He was entangled in the mesh of artificial government, a man of society battling for society, a political theorist. He was no sentimental philosopher. In thought he was not at all the author of the letters to Ignatius Sancho. He was not even the writer of the *Journal to Eliza*, and yet he was the same fellow with his 'infinite of oddities' who jumped out of one chapter into another and played pranks upon the serious. The satires of 'J. S.' and his allies reveal him such. In character he stands forth as clearly the author of *Tristram Shandy* as he does in the pages of the book. This is the importance of his part in the contests of 1741. His enemies spare neither rod nor flail in exhibiting what to them were his defects, what to us is his self. They prick him out a coxcomb, an impudent nothing that cries down the opinions of Tories. They see in him a butterfly, a mere puff, they present him in an instant as 'lean and sallow', the very Yorick one reads about, who at Sterne's age acted as foolishly as his creator acted in thrusting words down the throat of James Scott and in skipping off to solicit forgiveness. In his portrait of Yorick Sterne recalls in what manner 'J. S.' had regarded him. He remembers the entire collision.

Yorick was

as mercurial and sublimated a composition,—as heteroclitic a creature in all his declensions;—with as much life and whim, and *gaieté de cœur* about him, as the kindest climate could

have engendered and put together. With all this sail, poor *Yorick* carried not one ounce of ballast; he was utterly unpractised in the world; and, at the age of twenty-six, knew just about as well how to steer his course in it, as a romping, unsuspecting girl of thirteen: So that upon his first setting out, the brisk gale of his spirits, as you will imagine, ran him foul ten times in a day of some body's tackling; and as the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way,—you may likewise imagine, 'twas with such he had generally the ill luck to get the most entangled. . . . But, in plain truth, he was a man unhackneyed and unpractised in the world, and was altogether as indiscreet and foolish on every other subject of discourse where policy is wont to impress restraint. . . . And as his comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a *bon mot*, or to be enliven'd throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to *Yorick's* indiscretion. In a word, though he never sought, yet, at the same time, as he seldom shun'd occasions of saying what came uppermost, and without much ceremony;—he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and humour,—his gibes and his jests about him.—They were not lost for want of gathering.¹

The misfortune of Sterne was his inability to appear serious. 'J. S.' and the others knew him for the jester. This knowledge was the more irritating to their own importance, since the jester was an opponent of certain strength. It was, nevertheless, absurd to listen to his queries, when even Tories could laugh at his wit. To-day it is interesting to watch these political hacks, one moment angered at Sterne's insolence, and the next, sending verses of ridicule to the *Courant*:—'Mr Pope against L. S. *once more*,' 'A New Year's Gift for L—y', 'L—y's *Reasons for writing no more Gazetteers*.' Possibly Sterne would

¹ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Tristram Shandy*, i, Bk. I, chap. xi, pp. 26–8.

have agreed with Emerson, that to be great is to be misunderstood.

The art of writing Sterne learned by aiding others. He remained faithful to this tradition until he set out for himself. In 1741 he defended Cholmley Turner, in his sermons he attempted to help his congregation, in his *Political Romance* he came to the rescue of Dean Fountayne. As the controversies of 1741 produced his long letters and pamphlets, so the church quarrel of 1758 produced the *Romance* and the incitement to begin *Tristram Shandy*. Excluded from the literary world of London, this Vicar of Sutton remained for twenty years at York, spending his abilities upon ephemeral quarrels and causes. Because he was one of the few authors of the eighteenth century whose genius developed outside of the boundaries of London, it is evident that *Tristram Shandy* was the result of literary interests in a county town, that his share in those interests sprang immediately from the controversy over the Commissaryship of the Peculiar Court of Pickering and Pocklington, and eventually from the training he had received in the days of Cholmley Turner. 'The reason of my turning author?' he asked of a friend; 'why truly I am tired of employing my brains for other people's advantages.'¹ He became author in earnest and went up to London to receive the praise of the world. But in London there was one who did not adore, who could not admire. He was a Tory, and once, while making a tour of the Hebrides with James Boswell, he remarked, 'I do not like much to see a Whig in any dress; but I hate to see a Whig in a parson's gown.'

¹ *Works*, Oxford 1927, *Letters*, p. 29.

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, OXFORD
BY JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

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